

Fact and Fiction

BASKETBALL

STORIES



GAWKY for GUARD

A BIG AWKWARD KID-THE CAMPUS LAUGHING STOCK. BUT ON THE COURT HE WAS CAT-SMOOTH AND FATE-SURE.

By NELSON S. BOND

20c

The
**BASKET
BUSTER**

by HAROLD M. SHERMAN

SURESHOT

by LINTON DAVIES

Feature Articles

NAT HOLMAN

AN EXPERT SURVEY OF THE NATION'S ACE TEAMS BY THE FAMOUS PLAYER, COACH AND AUTHORITY.

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FIFTEEN-YEAR COACH OF N.Y.U.'S VIOLET COURT BLAZERS HIGHLIGHTS THE THRILLS AND THE FINE POINTS OF BASKET BALL.



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Fact and Fiction
**BASKETBALL
STORIES**

T. T. SCOTT, Treasurer and General Manager

MALCOLM REISS, Editor

FIVE BIG BASKETBALL NOVELETS

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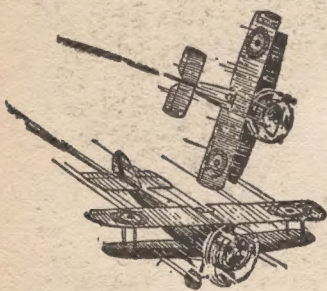
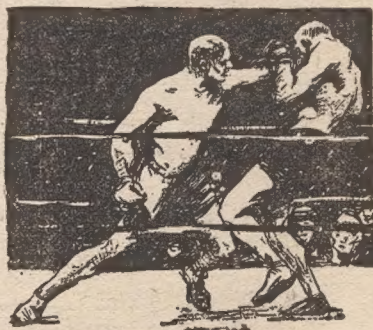


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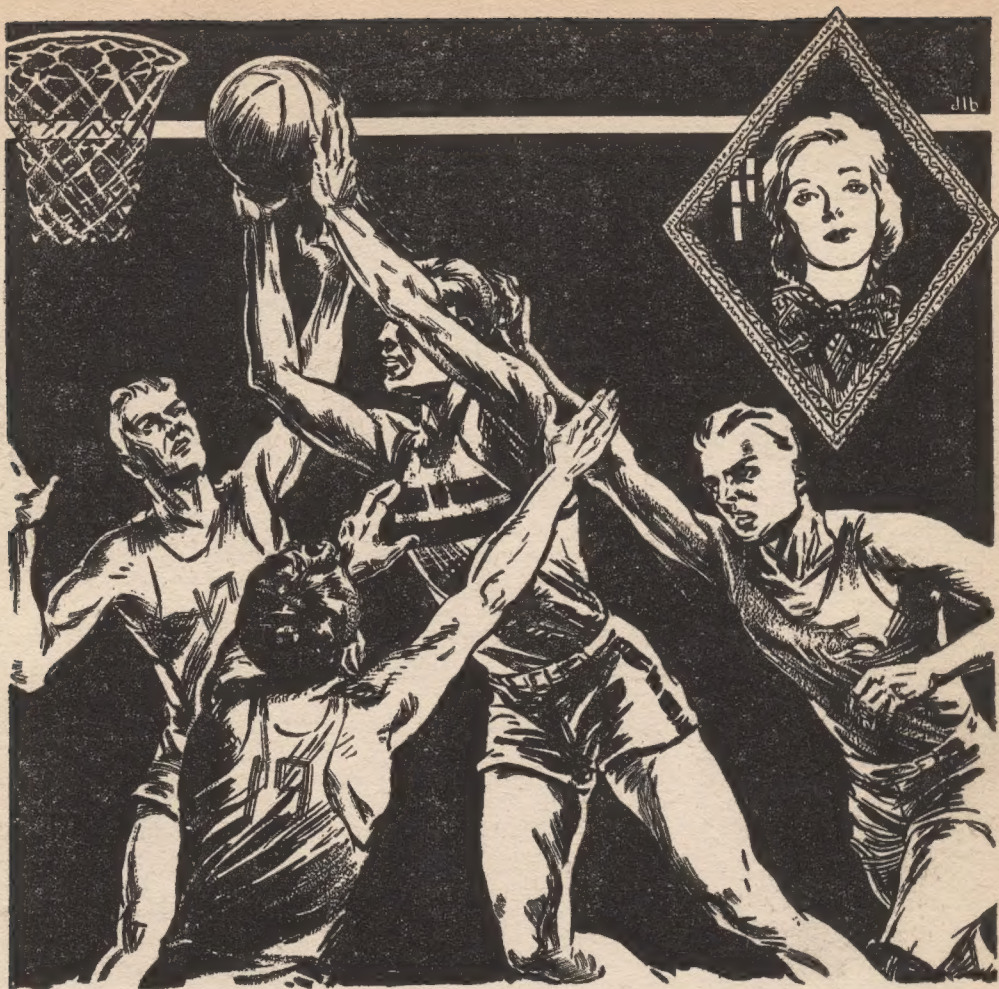
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“Gawky” for Guard

By NELSON S. BOND

They built Dan Carter from a clumsy hayseed into the flashiest, hottest hoopster in the Central Conference. Presto-ed him into a fair-haired wonder—then played him for the prize sucker of all time!

THE crimson-clad invaders from little Crawford College fell into a watchful five-three defense as the Midland squad, having just been scored on, put the ball into play. Warily the forward trio of Midland moved over the center-line, snapping the sphere back and forth with deft precision.

Slip Wilkinson, Midland's left forward, was the first to enter the defense zone. As a keen-eyed Crawford man moved in on him, Slip dribbled the ball three swift

paces, cut from the zone, and passed to Midland's towering center, Emory Bower. Bower's high looper from mid-court hovered precariously for a second on the rim of the hoop—then toppled back into the hands of a defending guard.

The Crawford College quintet, triangulating the ball with a skill born of desperation, swept the play up from their own territory to the Midland side of the hardwood. Their forward flash, Ab Wooster, took a pass from center, bounced the sphere

around his confused guard, charged into the scoring area—and shot! The cords scarcely rippled as the leather whisked through.

On the Midland bench, old Pop Brighton sighed and shook his head dolefully. That shot made the score 18-14—and now Midland held only a slim two-basket lead over the red invaders with just a few minutes remaining in this final period. And this was supposed to be a “warm-up” game for the Green!

Pop scanned his reserves thoughtfully; designated one eager youngster with a nod. The ref held his starting whistle as the new player charged out onto the court, and the scorekeeper marked the substitution; Brannigan at guard for O'Day.

A GAIN Midland put the ball in play—and this time it was Emphy Bower who opened the scoring path for the home team; running a solo to the center line where he stopped, wheeled, and shot a lightning pass to Jack Hapes. Hapes took the ball up the sideline, then pivoted desperately as the tight zone defense blotted his view of the basket. He shot the ball back to the pivot man.

Bower spun swiftly and shot a looper to the new Midland guard. Bus Brannigan's over-anxious fingers just scraped the leather as it bobbed weakly over the sideline. A groan rose from the Midland stands as the referee's whistle shrilled.

“Outside, Crawford!”

Wooster cuddled the ball, feinted, then shot it to his running mate, Stewart. Stewart leaped high in the air and bounced a bull's-eye off the backboard. The strings hissed as the ball jerked through. Midland 18; Crawford 16!

Pop Brighton peered anxiously at his watch; breathed a sigh of relief as he saw that only seconds remained in the game. Then his heart leaped to his mouth as he saw that Midland, instead of freezing the ball, was making one last desperate drive downcourt to increase their marginal lead.

Already the ball was past midcourt, and Slip Wilkinson, momentarily free of his guard, was pointing for a score try. Tense expectancy hovered over the watchers as the forward poised shot.

For a long, lazy moment the ball hung in the air like a thing motionless. Then

as if spent with its efforts, it dropped cleanly through the Crawford hoop just as the final whistle brought the game to a close. Midland had won—but in the eyes of the Midland rooters there was doubt and despair. If the Green could just barely beat out this little quintet, 20 to 16—what would happen when the real competition came along?

POP BRIGHTON dismissed his squad to the showers, then turned and trudged slowly toward the gymnasium door. He hadn't the heart to face his boys tonight. He knew only too well that he would see mirrored in their eyes something of the chagrin that he was feeling. His shoulders sagged dejectedly.

“Well, Pop?”

He raised his head and tried to force a smile to his lips as a slim arm looped itself through his. He turned to look into the worried face of Betty Carruthers, daughter of his oldest friend, now a co-ed at Midland.

“Well, Betty, we won.”

“Oh, Pop!” There was pity and regret in the girl's soft voice. Both knew what the other was thinking—that it was useless to smile and pretend that tonight's victory was an impressive one. “What's the matter with the team? Why didn't they make a better showing against the Crawford outfit?”

The lighted windows of the gymnasium had fallen behind now, and they were walking down the tree-lined pathway that wound past the tennis courts and the practice gridiron up to the ivy-covered walls of Old Main. Beneath the gloom of an ancient elm they sat down on a bench.

“I'll tell you, Betty,” said the veteran coach heavily. “It's the guard post that worries me most. You must have noticed that I made more substitutions there tonight than anywhere else—but none of them seemed to do any good. Wilkinson and Hapes are fine forwards. Emphy Bower is the classiest center in the conference. Hal Gordon is—well, you know what a fine all-around athlete Hal is! He plays his guard position as well as could be desired. But the fifth man—”

Brighton shook his head glumly.

“You can't make a basketball team out of four good men and one bad one. The

opposing team will spot the weak link too quickly and plan all their plays through his position. Brannigan and O'Day are the best we have, and you saw what happened to them tonight. Neither of them are capable of staving off a determined scorer. And neither of them can provide the scoring threat that should always be latent in a guard."

"Then there's only one thing for us to do," said the girl determinedly. "We must find such a guard. Surely in a college the size of Midland there must be someone."

Pop shook his head.

"Miracles don't happen, Betty. And anyway, if there is such a man, he'd better come along *now*."

"Yes? Or else what?"

"It will be too late for me!" shrugged the coach. "The wolves are howling for my scalp. The alumni and the Athletic Council are complaining because I haven't given Midland a championship team, or even a contender, for the past six years. And if something doesn't turn up this year—"

"But, Pop! They can't do that to you! Why, you've been basketball coach here for almost twenty years."

"Yes, Betty. For almost twenty years. But I'll be among the discards next year unless I can come up with a new guard. A guard with a quick eye, sure hands, a smooth stride on the floor."

Pop rose from the bench.

"Well, youngster, time you were getting along home. I'll see you to the sorority house."

"Oh, no, Pop," the girl protested swiftly. "It's not far from here. I'll be all right. I'll see you later!"

With a gay wave, she turned and moved swiftly down the shadowed path by Old Main. The coach watched her disappear around the corner of the college building, then plodded silently toward his own little home on the edge of the campus.

A LANKY, ungainly shadow loomed before Betty Carruthers as she swung around the corner of Old Main, causing her to step back with a quick, startled cry. A voice from the darkness spoke reassuringly.

"Sorry, Miss! Guess I wasn't looking where I was going. Oh, Miss Carruthers!"

She recognized the voice. It was that country boy, Dan Carter. The one Hal Gordon and the rest of her friends had nicknamed "Gawky." There was a faint amusement in her tone as she answered him.

"It was stupid of me to be frightened. But we met so unexpectedly."

"Could I—I mean, would it be all right if I saw you home, Miss Carruthers?" asked the boy eagerly.

Betty hesitated. She had wanted to be alone. If this awkward lout insisted on talking to her, she knew she would go mad. Still, it was late and she had quite some way to go.

"Why yes," she agreed reluctantly. "It would be very nice of you."

She remembered, now, the first time she had seen him. It had been during the final days of the football season. She had been watching the football practice, a lonely figure in the stands, and Gawky Carter had been playing end for the scrub team. A very poor end, at that. The regular squad had seemed to be able to score through his position almost at will—mainly because the lanky boy was so unbelievably awkward. He stumbled and fell, she remembered, all over the field. When his clumsiness was not removing *him* from a play, it seemed to interfere with one of his teammates.

Late in the practice session, with the scrubs in possession of the ball, he had managed, somehow or other, to receive an almost impossible forward pass from the scrub quarterback. A play that had astonished even his teammates, for the ball had seemed to be far out of reach of any eligible receiver—but he had immediately proceeded to nullify his one spectacular play by driving headlong into a stone-wall defense that dropped him for a loss.

ONLY once, since then, had Betty even so much as glimpsed the gawky one. Somewhat to her own surprise, she had seen him at a Student Mix in the Student Union Building. He had, as a matter of fact, danced with her once and now she recalled, briefly, her own mild astonishment that the lanky chap whose awkwardness had been so apparent on the football field was not at all a bad dancer. On the smooth polished boards of the dancing floor his clumsy length seemed to get new poise;

his awkwardness slipping away from him amazingly, and he moved to the music in perfect rhythm and timing.

She stole a glance at him as he strode along beside her, silent in the frosty moonlight. He wasn't a bad looking boy. Not handsome at all, of course.¹² Perhaps even on the homely side, but a pleasant, frank kind of homeliness. For a moment she felt a pang of pity. After all, he was just a kid from the sticks. It was too bad he was so loutish on the gridiron. All he had was a pair of sure hands.

A gasp of shocked wonderment nearly passed her lips as suddenly there rung in her mind the memory of Pop Brighton's words,

"... a guard with a quick eye, sure hands, a smooth stride on the floor. . . ."

Could this boy, could this clumsy fellow they all called "Gawky"—? He *had* caught forwards! And he *was* a smooth dancer!

Betty turned to her silent partner suddenly.

"Mr. Carter! Don't you play basketball?"

The boy laughed a trifle grimly.

"Who, me? I'm afraid I don't do anything very well."

"But you have played, haven't you?"

"Oh, I've played. Back home, when I was in high school. But for that matter, I played football there, too. When I came up to Midland—"

He shrugged.

"Why don't you go out for the basketball team?" asked Betty. "They need men and if you used to play in high school you ought to be pretty good."

In the moonlight she could see the tighter lines that suddenly developed in his lean cheeks. His voice, when he spoke, was taut.

"My athletic days are over at Midland, Miss Carruthers. You might lick a puppy once and not teach him a lesson, but after three beatings—" He laughed harshly. "I went out for baseball when I was a freshman here. The boys laughed me out of my uniform. Then I went out for track in the last half that same year. I won myself a nickname that you probably know. Gawky! Even then I hadn't learned my lesson. In September I went out for football. I ended up on the fourth squad. The only reason I wasn't any farther

down the list was that there were only four squads. No, thanks! From that time on I've confined myself to my studies. No more athletics for me!"

Betty stared at him. The more she thought of it, the more she felt that here was the man whom Pop had been looking for. Woman's intuition, perhaps, told her that her guess was right.

THEY had reached the wide porch of her sorority house. The hour was late, but Betty knew suddenly, desperately, that she would have to do something to change Gawky's mind about going out for the team.

"Well, goodnight, Miss Carruthers," the boy was saying hesitantly. "I hope we'll meet again sometime."

Suddenly the path was clear before her, and Betty knew that it lay within her power to bring this boy out for a basketball trial. There was something in the catch of his voice, the look of his eyes fastened hungrily upon her, that told the girl *she* might save Midland's championship chances—and Pop's job!

Wasn't it worth a try? Her hunch might be wrong. Gawky might prove to be just as awkward and useless on the court as on the track, the diamond, the gridiron. If he were, she had nothing to lose. Impulsively the girl placed one smooth, warm hand in the lad's larger one.

"Goodnight, Mr. Carter," she said warmly. "It's been nice, hasn't it? But I'm sorry I won't be seeing you again for a while. You see I'm very fond of basketball. Pop Brighton practically raised me you know. I go to watch the practice almost every day. I haven't much time for anything else."

She turned deliberately and started to run up the steps to the doorway.

"Wait a minute, Miss Carruthers!" In a single bound the tall young man was beside her, his eyes searching hers. "You mean you're very interested in basketball?"

"Oh, very!"

"Then if I—I mean, you'll have to come home after practice sessions. Couldn't I bring you home, sometimes?"

Betty permitted herself a studious frown.

"I'm afraid it wouldn't look quite right. I mean for you to meet me at the gym con-

stantly and with no apparent reason."

"But if I had a reason for being at the gym," persisted the youth eagerly, "If I went out for the basketball team, for instance—"

The girl allowed herself to sway provocatively toward the boy for an instant.

"If you were out for the team," she laughed softly, "That would certainly make a difference—wouldn't it?"

Then she was gone, and on the steps of the Tri-Gam house a lanky youngster stood watching the closed door for a long, breathless moment before he turned and crunched down the gravel path, his shoulders squared with a new determination.

II

DAN CARTER, striding past the time-honored old buildings of Midland College on the way to his little rooming-house, felt the tug of a dozen conflicting emotions battling within him.

For the first time, he told himself over and over, someone in Midland College had noticed him. Up to now, his contacts with other students had been limited to a nodding acquaintance with a few classmates. A professor or two knew him by sight, and some of his scrub teammates had a gruff greeting for him as he passed by, but of real friends he had none. And more than anything else in the world, Gawky Carter wanted friends.

But now, he thought with sudden exaltation, all that was ended. There was someone, at least, who had taken an interest in him. And that someone was more important, by far, than all the other thousands of students on Midland campus. Ever since that long past night when Dan Carter had summoned all his courage and asked Betty Carruthers for a dance at the Student Mix, he had worshiped her silently. To him, she epitomized all that which, combined, made for perfect womanhood; charm, delicacy, and loveliness.

And incredibly enough she seemed to like him. Hadn't that shown plainly in every word she spoke? In the way she looked at him?

POP BRIGHTON whistled the milling players to a halt. "All right, boys! That's enough warm-up. We'll try fifteen

minutes of team practice now. North court; Wilkinson, Hapes, Bower, Gordon, O'Day. South court; Blane, White, Rochester, Brannigan, Carter. Make it snappy, fellows! Let's go!"

Swiftly the two practice squads took their positions. Poised in the guard position, Dan Carter wiped his moist palms nervously on his trunks. Across from him, Jack Hapes grinned consolingly.

"Don't worry, Gawky. We'll go easy on you!"

Dan bit his lip. It hadn't taken long for the court squad to adopt his football nickname. That was Hal Gordon's doing, of course. Gordon, against whom he had played when the three-letter man was on the varsity eleven.

He smiled mirthlessly and riveted his attention on the play as Pop tossed the ball up and the two fives swung into action. Bower, coasting, allowed Rochester to steal the tap. The ball bounced forward to Sam White, who whipped it 'cross-court to his running mate, Will Blane. Blane, boxed, lost the ball to Gordon who raced it down court into the scrubs' territory.

Bower, coming in fast, took the ball on a short pass from Gordon; found himself unable to get set for a try, and whipped the leather to Hapes. Hapes came in after it leisurely, started to set himself before he even had the ball.

Then suddenly he was a lonely figure in the subs' court! Gawky Carter, the new guard candidate, had whipped around from behind him, stretched out one of those gangling arms, and intercepted the pass cleanly. Already he was down to mid-court, and his perfect toss was dropping neatly into the ready hands of Rochester. The scrub center wheeled swiftly and threw. The ball flicked cleanly through the hoop!

As the teams sought their positions, Hal Gordon addressed the first-squad roughly.

"Swell stuff! Letting that long cold drink of water swipe a pass from you. Come on, gang! Show 'em how!"

The Regulars put the ball into play, zig-zagging it down the court accurately as the Reserves went into the customary three-two defense. Wilkinson, first man to enter the scoring zone, found himself covered by Blane, and tossed backward to the hard-charging Bower. Bower's return was unexpected, and Brannigan was caught out of

position as Hapes crossed the court to slip a two-pointer in from the left guard's zone. Gordon grinned as his teammates withdrew beaming.

"That's the stuff! Now we'll shove one through Gawky's position just to show him who's who around here."

STARTING the play for the first time, the Reserves took a few seconds' time out to prepare a hasty plan of offense. Dan Carter, all his timidity wiped away now that he was once more back on the familiar battlefield of the hardwood boards, spoke succinctly to his nodding teammates. As Pop blew his whistle, Reach Rochester put the ball in play for the scrubs.

The Reserves charged down in what appeared to be an orthodox attack. Rochester fired the ball back to Gawky Carter from midcourt position, then continued to race on down to the far corner of the Regulars' court, under the net. A brace of Regular defenders blotted him out of the play; split to cover two men as Will Blane entered the threatening area.

Like a flash, Carter tossed a reach-high blazer to the hands of Rochester who made a half turn and shot the ball back to Carter. The running guard took the ball at midcourt. No one was within eight feet of him as he crouched and laid the leather through the strings!

On the sidelines, Pop Brighton's mouth dropped open. He had just seen something that he had had in the back of his mind for two seasons—a play that he had always felt would work with the right man, but that he had never dared even introduce to his boys. He started to speak, then changed his mind. Perhaps it was a fluke! Sure, it must have been. This lanky fellow, Carter, had only been out to practice for two days.

A murmur from the scrubs seated beside him on the sideline bench drew the coach's attention back to the court. He was just in time to see Gawky Carter reach high into the air, steal a lofty pass out of the luckless grip of Jack Hapes, and whip the ball downcourt to Sam White, sleeping under the Regulars' basket. And as White slipped the ball easily over the rim, for the first time in many months a new gleam lighted Pop Brighton's faded eyes. Luck be damned. The kid was good! Midland

had found the fifth man for its team.

He blew his whistle.

"Try a little change here, men. You, Carter. Play right guard for the Regulars. O'Day, switch with Carter."

THE change was made, and now the reorganized first-team squad put the ball into play again. Pop Brighton sat back on the bench, slowly nodding his head in approval as the new quintet seemed suddenly to find its scoring punch. In rapid succession, the Regulars tallied one . . . two . . . three baskets against the second team aggregation. Backed by two dependable defense men, Wilkinson and Hapes seemed to find the basket, while Bower became a stalwart at pivot. Gordon and Carter alternated at breaking up Reserve threats, and either man showed an aptitude for breaking loose on a running guard play that led to a direct toss or a pass for a score.

Point by point the score mounted for the Regular quintet, while a floundering Reserve squad battled vainly to quell the five-man uprising that confronted them. And finally, a new confidence in his voice, Pop stopped the uneven slaughter and dismissed his charges to the showers.

As they left the gym, he turned to the quiet figure seated in the stands beyond the court.

"We've found him, Betty," he gloated. "We've found the fifth man that we needed. There's a chance for Midland yet."

A HALF hour later, Hal Gordon came up from the dressing-room to find Betty Carruthers still waiting in the empty gymnasium. Pop had gone back to his office. Somehow, before the honest warmth of Brighton's enthusiasm, Betty could not find it within herself to tell him of the subterfuge which had brought Gawky Carter to the Midland squad. She knew instinctively, that the coach would not approve and she was beginning to feel, herself, that there had been something a little mean and underhanded in her method of luring the country boy. Still a bargain was a bargain, and Betty was grimly determined to carry out her part; especially since Gawky had shown up so well in his first real trial.

"Well, fancy meeting you here," the

smooth Gordon grinned, taking Betty's arm. "Getting late, sweetcakes. We'd better be getting along home to dinner."

"Don't, Hal!" begged the girl nervously, slipping her arm from his grasp. "I'm waiting here for someone."

"Who? Pop? Aw, forget it! He won't mind."

"No, honestly, Hal!"

She stopped suddenly as Dan Carter, his lean face glowing, bounded up from the dressing-room to pause hesitantly as he saw the pair before them. Gordon scowled as he noted the swift change pass over the girl's face, and saw her smile at Carter.

"So that's the way it is, eh?" he gritted in a low tone. "Gone overboard for that gawky galoot, have you? A fine mess this is."

"Not now, Hal. *Please!*" The girl's whisper was frantic. "Oh, hello, Dan. How does it feel to be back in a uniform again?"

"Never mind that," began Hal Gordon hotly.

"Hal!" Betty turned swiftly and slipped her arm through that of the surprised Carter. "Dan, will you take me home, please? Now?"

Carter nodded, his eyes following the red-faced Gordon as the other guard wheeled and strode away. It was not until they had almost reached the sorority house that he dared ask the question that was on his mind.

"What's wrong with Gordon? He was angry about something, wasn't he?"

Betty hesitated. For an instant she was tempted to confess that Gordon's anger was not groundless. For the past year, she and the fraternity man had been constant companions at most campus events. Only a recluse like Dan Carter would not be aware of that. But to tell Carter that would be to let him know that her interest in him had been purely a fraud from the beginning.

"Perhaps I shouldn't tell you, Dan," she said. Then, deciding that she might as well go all the way as be half a pretender. "—but Hal is jealous. Of you."

"Of me!" There was modesty in the gawky one's tone and amusement, too, but beneath both of these was something else.

"But we don't have to pay any attention to him, do we?" smiled the girl, lifting her

face to his. "Let's talk about you, instead—and about the practice today. Dan, you were marvelous."

GORDON was waiting at the edge of the campus when Dan Carter finally left Betty on the steps of the Tri-Gamma house. The jut of the campus hero's jaw left no doubt as to his attitude.

"Listen here, Gawky," he began belligerently, "You and I have a little talking to do. About Betty."

Calmly, Dan shook himself free of the other's irate grasp. His voice was cold and passionless.

"Don't be a fool, Gordon. I don't intend to discuss Miss Carruthers with you or anyone else."

"Oh, you don't, eh?" sneered Gordon. "Well, listen to this, my lumbering teammate—Betty Carruthers is *my* girl! Has been for the past year. Now, stay away from her if you know what's good for you!"

"When," said Dan softly, "and if Miss Carruthers asks me to stay away from her, I'll do it. Not before then. And not on your say-so, Hal."

"Why, you bag of bones!" raged Gordon. He took a swift step forward, changed his mind and stepped back again, a curious glint in his eye. "All right, Gawky! You've had your warning. Take my advice or you'll find yourself the laughing stock of the whole campus. There are ways to take care of hicks who get too smart."

III

THE Midland College palestra rocked with the thunder of applause as Slip Wilkinson ducked around his defense man, took a perfect placement from Dan Carter, and slipped it through the enemy hoop. Delighted followers of the Green listened eagerly as the scorekeeper intoned, "Midland 28; Tech 11."

Of all those crammed into the brilliantly lighted gymnasium, only two men knew that all was not well with the Midland squad. One other, Pop Brighton, might have guessed. There was a faint uneasiness etched in the lines of his face as he watched his stellar quintet fall into their positions. Carter was missing tries

that the coach felt sure should have been made, and the exchange of passes between the backcourt men had more than once resulted in outsides which had been costly.

He concentrated on the jibing faction of his basketball machine as Tech put the ball into play. Legs Monahan, Tech's fighting center, led the way down the alley, bouncing the ball smoothly before him. Flash Ormond, the blueclad left forward, moved into Midland territory to be immediately covered by the alert Jack Hapes. Wilkinson covered the other forward, Stewart. The Tech offensive stalled briefly; Legs marking time for an opening by triangulating between his two advancing guards; Ferraro and Sproule. With everything to gain and nothing to lose, Tech was putting all its eggs in one basket; banking on a five-man offensive to reduce some of that lopsided Midland lead.

Empty Bower advanced cautiously toward the opposing center. As he left his zone, Flash Ormond turned and raced to the center post. Stewart deserted his guarding man and dropped back to Monahan's side. In a split instant, Carter sensed the play! An attempt to confuse the defenders by juggling positions. He moved up quickly to cover Stewart who was racing for the side court. He shouted a quick word to Gordon.

"Shift!"

Gordon hesitated briefly; then doggedly remained at his defense position. A three-man offensive seized the opportunity; paced the ball down the right court and ended beneath Midland's hoop. Legs Monahan tapped the ball in for the Tech score.

In the line-up, Gordon simulated indignation.

"Watch your own zone, Carter!" he snarled. "They scored again through your position! That's the fourth time tonight!"

"You were flat-footed," flashed Carter. "I warned you to shift defense that time. I had to come over to cover Stewart. Monahan was *your* man!"

"Are you trying to tell me how to play?" demanded Gordon hotly. "Say, Gawky, I've got a notion to—"

The referee sounded the warning whistle. Bower nodded to his teammates, then put the ball into play. He raced it out of Midland territory in regulation time; then spun and shot it back over his shoulder to

Hal Gordon, while the two forwards moved into the enemy court. This was the double running-guard routine Pop Brighton had mapped out for his charges. A plan calculated to force back the opposing defense, leaving either of the two sharpshooting backfield men free for a scoring try from or a trifle beyond the center stripe. When one shot, the other stepped back immediately to his own basket as a primary defense man.

Gordon took the ball unmolested, tapped it once or twice on the boards, and started toward the shooting line. Carter began his fade. Then suddenly, without warning, Hal wheeled and shot toward Carter. The lanky boy's desperate lunge jounced the sphere off his fingertips. It struck the sideline just at the center line and then rolled out!

"Outside, Tech!" droned the official.

Monahan made the toss-in to Ferraro, who razzle-dazzled to Sproule. The Tech guard shot a lofty looper to Ormond who blazed down the sideline to score from suicide corner. And a few seconds later, as the chagrined Midland squad once more dallied with the ball near center court, the referee tooted the signal that ended Midland's first conference game of the young season.

"SO what happened then?" asked Betty Carruthers.

Pop Brighton shook his head slowly.

"That was all. When I came into the dressing-room they broke apart. Gordon went into the showers, and Carter went back to his bench. I think they hoped I hadn't noticed anything but how could I help it? The air was charged with ill-feeling between the two."

He grunted to himself.

"When I discovered Carter, I had hoped that this would be a Midland year. But no team with two warring members can make the grade with the kind of competition we're due to meet from now on. Those two boys must settle their differences if we're to get anywhere."

Betty rose.

"Well, Pop, I'll have to be running along now. I have lots to do." She patted the worried coach's arm affectionately. "Don't worry about Carter and Gordon. Perhaps they'll be all right—shortly."

"I hope so," said Brighton gloomily. "I certainly hope so."

Betty smiled and left the mentor's office. As she swung up the campus lane she revolved the question of the Gordon-Carter feud in her mind. It was perfectly obvious that Gordon, angered by her seeming interest in the gawky lad, was the instigator of the trouble. And that meant that if she were to re-create good will amongst the members of the basketball team, she would have to take the hot-headed three-letter man into her confidence.

Disconsolately the girl recognized that what had started out as a harmless little trick was rapidly turning into a juggernaut that threatened her from every side. On that night when she had decided to win Carter over to the basketball squad by being the charm girl, she had not foreseen these complications that had arisen. Now she was firmly impaled on the horns of a dilemma. Not only was Gordon enraged because the country boy had evidently found the inner track to her heart—but within the past week Dan Carter had demonstrated more and more clearly that his feeling for her was something deeper than admiration.

A CRISP footstep behind her roused her from her moody reverie. It was Hal Gordon himself. And even as he opened his mouth to speak, she knew that there was more trouble coming.

"I've been looking for you," began Hal roughly. "I want to get this Gawky Carter business straightened out once and for all. Just where he stands—and where I get off!"

And then Betty told him. Told him the whole story. How, in an effort to save Pop's job, she had deliberately lured the clumsy boy into the one sport at which he was skilful. Gordon listened, unbelievably at first, and then with growing amusement as she finished her explanation.

"—and so he's playing now," she concluded. "And with five good first-team men, Pop has every reason to hope for a championship year. That is, if you and Carter will bring your feud to an end."

Gordon laughed buoyantly.

"I might have guessed. If I hadn't been such a darned fool I would have known that a smart girl like you could never get

really interested in a hayseed like Carter."

Betty laughed weakly. To her own surprise, she felt a tug of resentment at Gordon's superior attitude. But it would be futile, now, to undo whatever good she had done.

"This is a howl on Gawky," continued Gordon exuberantly. "Well, the big sap asked for it. Let him stew in his own gravy. But mind you, young lady, after the season is over, you and I have a lot of making up for lost time to take care of. And until then—well, give the rube a good ride. He has it coming to him."

THAT night, for the first time since this friendship with Betty Carruthers had developed into an important part of his life, Dan Carter found the girl poor company.

He missed the gay laughter that was so much a part of her.

Puzzled, he had dared at last to speak to her haltingly as they stopped at the Tri-Gam house.

"What is it, Betty? Is it something I've done?"

The girl's eyes tried to meet his, then dropped. How could she tell him that it was not him but herself that she despised this evening? His awkward but honest solicitation for her added extra fuel to the fires of recrimination burning within her. And suddenly Betty Carruthers realized that she had never known a person quite like Dan Carter before.

She saw him now, as for the first time, with eyes suddenly startled by a new knowledge. And when she spoke, there was a new note in her voice, a faint throbbing that brought an answering beat to Dan's heart.

"No, it's something *I've* done, Dan. Something I wish I could do differently now."

"What is it?" he asked gently. "Maybe I can help you set it straight?"

She shook her head blindly.

"Dan, I've been so foolish. And I can't even tell you how—now." Her voice faltered.

He looked at her long and searchingly; found within her eyes that which gave him the right to do what he had longed to do, it seemed, all his life. He moved forward to her as she lifted her head. Their lips

met and held in the first kiss of newly discovered love. Then with a tiny sob, the girl turned and fled into the big house.

POP BRIGHTON, a huge grin wreathing his weather face, sat on the sideline bench and watched as the Green Raiders of Midland swept into the final minutes of play with an overwhelming lead against their opponents.

These past four games had convinced him that this was, as he had hoped, the dream-team that would salvage his self-respect and save him his job at Midland. No longer was the Green squad the quintet of in-and-outers that had eked out bare victories in its opening matches. In successive weeks, Pop's boys had pounded out convincing lickings to Wesleyan, Craig and Rothesay. Tonight's win—for with the score already 33-12 it could hardly be anything but a win—would bring the Green to the season's halfway mark with a perfect slate. At that rate the Conference title would be in the bag long before the season ended. So Pop grinned.

On the field, a machine-like quintet worked in perfect harmony to plow through the Marston Bisons and score almost at will.

Wilkinson and Hapes were demons on offense; twin scoring threats amply supported by their superb pivot man, Emphy Bower. And the second line, since their petty private warfare had vanished miraculously more than a month ago, was taking the lion's share of credit for Midland's victory streak. Gordon and Carter, their differences patched up, were like two smooth pistons working in an oiled groove. Each one a pillar of defense when the enemy threatened, each one a dangerous scoring threat himself when carrying the ball.

So Pop mused, and watched with a happy eye as the Bison forwards raced down into Midland territory, passing the ball back and forth between them, in a frantic attempt to upset this stone-wall that repulsed their every effort.

Another spectator, seated with a group of her sorority sisters just a few seats away from the coach smiled happily. Within these recent few weeks, Betty Carruthers had somehow forgotten that a time loomed in the not too distant future when she

might have to pay the piper for little white lies told months ago.

IV

MIDLAND'S basketball season was not a crowded one, but it was tough. Within a three hundred mile area centered about Midland College were eight colleges of almost equal size. Traditional rivalry amongst these scattered campuses had long since crystallized into the formation of a tight, hard Conference league. Each year, as the various athletic seasons waxed and waned, teams from the well-matched colleges met and battled for supremacy in baseball, basketball, football, and such minor sports as track, tennis, golf, and field hockey.

Each school, naturally, met occasional teams outside of the conference but somehow these other games did not seem so important. Nor did they bring out the full fighting spirit of the players. Midland alumni still tell, with awed respect, of that famous Midland "doomed battalion" which, in the final game of the season, after having lost nearly every previous gridiron battle, woke to roaring life and battered out a victory over a powerful Norcross conference eleven which, just a few weeks before, had met and defeated a mighty Fordham squad.

That was one reason why, as the weeks rolled on, Pop Brighton could not afford to let his pace-setting charge let down for even one game against the parade of conference teams that met them on the hardwood. Always a specter on the horizon was the possibility that Everett or Norcross or Tech might slip up from behind to topple Midland's title hopes.

"Don't get it into your heads," Pop warned the Green squad, "that you can coast from here on in. Norcross is just waiting for us to slip, and so is Tech. In our two remaining games we have to face Everett and Norcross, and you know what that means!"

Grimly the squadsmen nodded. They knew only too well what that meant. For low-ranking Everett was one of the three teams that had beaten the Green on the first round. Norcross was another. Since those two losses, Midland had run through the list again, only losing one tight game

to a smooth-clicking vengeful Tech quintet.

Thus it was that the Midland squad dug in harder than ever, pointing for the Everett battle on the following week-end. If they won that, a tie-off was assured and a clean win possible if Norcross lost one of its two remaining battles. But if they lost to Everett again, it was still anybody's contest!

TO Dan Carter, however, there were other matters of importance than the desire to win the conference title. In these recent weeks, a whole new world of activity had opened before him.

Most amazing of all was the way in which, overnight, Hal Gordon's attitude toward him had changed. Dan could scarcely believe now that there had been an afternoon when Hal had threatened him, warned him to stay away from Betty. Or that there had been an incident in the locker room which, had Pop Brighton not entered at the strategic moment, would have certainly developed into an open brawl.

For no apparent reason, Gordon had undergone a swift and complete change. His manner now was distinctly cordial, even friendly. Sometimes, Dan thought with a faint groping doubt, just a shade *too* friendly. As though the other guard were in some subtle fashion mocking him. But in the face of Hal's continued bluff heartiness, Dan put this unworthy suspicion firmly away from his mind.

And then one afternoon, following practice, Gordon came over and sat beside him on the bench.

"Busy tonight, Dan?"

"Nothing important," replied Carter. "A few studies to make up. But that won't take long. Why?"

"Well," said Gordon casually, "I thought if you weren't up to your neck, you might manage to drop over to the house for a little while. Some of the boys would like to meet you."

Carter's heart leaped. An invitation to the Phi Tau house. That could only mean one thing—that he was being considered for a bid.

"Say, I'd like to," he agreed quickly. "Any particular time?"

"Whenever you want to. Make it about eight. We can shoot a little bridge and

just chat about things," said Gordon. "I'll be seeing you, then."

He moved away leisurely, chuckling to himself at the open expression of delight on the big, lanky fellow's face. This was all fixed with the boys at the house. They would take Carter for a ride so gently, so cleverly, that he would not even know he'd been on the pan until he found himself brown on one side. Or perhaps, Gordon thought amusedly, they could prolong the fun a little. Tease the kid along for a few weeks, until the basketball season was over, then give him the works.

But if Gordon's intention was obscure to Carter, it was plain to Betty Carruthers. That afternoon, as she and the lanky guard strolled across the campus, she frowned at Dan's delighted recital of Gordon's invitation.

"Well, what's the matter?" asked Dan finally, as the girl maintained a thoughtful silence. "Don't you realize what this means? Aren't you pleased?"

"I'm afraid I do realize what it means, Dan. Only too well. Tell me, didn't you have some trouble with Hal earlier in the season?"

"Yes, but that's all over now," explained Carter. "These past few weeks he has been very friendly. You know," the young man looked at the girl gratefully. "I have you to thank for all this. I mean my breaking into the college social life and all that sort of thing. Before you came along and interested me in going out for the basketball team, I was a nobody. Everything's different now. I feel as if I *belong* here in Midland. I see people on the campus whom I can stop and speak to. I have friends in my classes. There's the team. And there's *you*."

"Don't, Dan!" begged the girl in a small voice.

"But it's all your doing," persisted Gawky. "If you hadn't suggested basketball to me, I would never have gone out for the team. I was all washed up with athletics. I thought I was a flop. And I was, too, until I had you to inspire me."

"Dan, promise me something!" interrupted the girl swiftly. "Say that you won't go to the Phi Tau house tonight."

"But why?"

"I can't tell you why. But there are reasons. You must believe me."

"Come on," he said, "You're just getting all excited about something that may not amount to a hill of beans. Anyway, I have to go now. I told Hal Gordon I'd be there."

"And you won't change your mind?"

"Betty, I don't understand why you're acting this way. I want to go. Ever since I've been at Midland I've been hoping for a Phi Tau bid."

"Very well." There was defeat in the girl's voice; defeat and a touch of fear, too. "But, Dan, whatever may happen after this, remember that I asked you not to go?"

LATER that evening, before the crackling fireplace in the chapter room, a group of Phi Taus were talking over their recent visitor. Skeeter Myers, secretary of the fraternity and editor of the college Daily, spun a cigarette accurately into the blazing hearth.

"Say, listen, Hal," he said thoughtfully, "I understood you to say this Carter fellow was a heel?"

Gordon laughed.

"I didn't say he was a heel. I just said he was a rube. I brought the guy around so you could get a laugh!"

"Well, I for one didn't get a laugh," said Myers curtly. "I didn't even get a snicker. As a matter of fact, I rather liked him."

"I'm inclined to agree," rumbled Tod Hemingway from the divan. "I liked him fine. I thought you said he had a swelled head, Gordon?"

Gordon stared. This was not the kind of aftermath he had been looking forward to. What was the matter with these guys, anyway?

"He has!" he snapped curtly. "He thinks he's the big shot on the basketball team, for one thing."

"Judging from the games I've seen," commented one of the brothers, "he is. He's put us in the running for the first time in years, anyway."

"As a matter of fact," Myers said seriously, "I think your little joke was a flop, Hal. I'm all for slapping a pledge pin on Carter."

"Don't be a damned fool!" rasped Gordon. He rose angrily. "The kid's just a hick. A hayseed! And as for basketball—why, he wouldn't even be out for the

team if Betty Carruthers hadn't turned the heat on him. She's been playing him for a sucker ever since the season opened. And yet you fellows think—Pfah!" He turned on his heel and marched out of the room as the assembled brothers looked after him curiously.

Finally Skeeter Myers nodded his head.

"Comes the dawn," he said solemnly. "I'm beginning to see a glimmer of light, gang."

IT was the night of the Everett game. Pop Brighton, watching his charges warm up in pre-game practice, felt a chill of apprehension pass through him. For the past two days, now, he had had the uneasy feeling that once again all was not well with his quintet.

It wasn't that his men were overtrained. All of them were, or seemed to be, in top condition for the stretch race. Nor could their fault be overconfidence for he had drilled into their heads the fact that Norcross and Tech were each but a single game behind the leading Midland team, that a loss at this stage of the contest might prove fatal.

A banner crowd was noisily jamming the sideline tiers as the giant clock slowly inched toward the starting hour. Midland, its first championship in years within sight, was proving its loyalty to the Green Raiders. Who knows, was the thought in each rooter's head, but that tonight's game may end the race? If Midland wins, and if both Norcross and Tech are defeated—

Realizing the importance of these other two matches, the college Daily had connected direct wires with the Craig campus, where Norcross was playing the fourth place team, and with Tech's bailiwick, where the Tech aggregation was meeting lowly Marston. Should Craig and Marston, by some chance, beat the two prime contenders, Midland would be in regardless of the last season match with Norcross. Therefore, Skeeter Myers' campus newspaper was planning to bring to Midland's fans the results of these other contests as they came in.

A warning whistle sounded, and the practice squads left the boards. Pop Brighton gathered his team about him for a word of last-minute advice.

"As you know," he told his starting five,

"tonight may wind up the race, if we win! And if you boys play as you played against Wesleyan and Rothesay, we'll win! But, we won't win if you play as you practiced yesterday and the day before that.

"You know what I mean. You, Gordon—a little more teamwork with your running mate. And you, Carter—less fumbling. Now, get out there and win!"

Dan Carter, striding into his position, stole a glance at the left guard to see what reaction Pop Brighton's words had set up. He recognized the value of Pop's words. In these past few days—ever since Hal Gordon had asked him to visit the Phi Tau house, the other guard had been acting queerly again. Had been acting much as he did in those early season games. Sulky and rebellious. When he was forced to pass to Carter, he did so in a style that was oftentimes impossible to handle, and whenever possible he tried to "hog" the leather; refusing to allow his fellow guard to get into the play.

Hal must be sore about something, but what? Dan shook his head. It was beyond him. He turned and looked into the Midland stands, and a smile lighted his face as he found that for which he had been searching—a slim hand waving encouragement to him; a girl whose eyes would be upon him throughout the game. Dan grinned. Well, to hell with Gordon and his moodiness. He'd play this game as he had played all his games for her. For Betty.

EMPY BOWER leaped high at the top-off to swing the leather from the Everett center, but Hi Jenkins' fingers touched it first and flicked it into the waiting hands of the right forward, Kinky Henley.

Carter smothered his man successfully; made him return the ball to Jenkins, who turned and whipped it to the other side of the court where Bill Darrah, racing down the sideline, eluded the primary defense man to enter scoring position.

This Everett outfit had beaten them once before, Dan remembered, and they mustn't repeat. He deserted his man momentarily; fainted out of position, and returned just as Darrah whipped the ball toward Henley. Carter's long arm snaked out; spun the ball in to him. And the Midland four-

man offensive swung into action as Wilkinson and Hapes paced the ball-dribbling running guard downcourt.

It was Emphy Bower, evading Jenkins to slip beneath the enemy basket, who scored the opening marker for Midland. Everett won back half of the two-pointer when Jenkins shot a single foul a few seconds later, but then the famed Midland razzle-dazzle really got under way.

Wilkinson blazed the trail with Midland's second score; dropping the ball in on a bouncing back-pass from his running mate. Hapes kept up the good work by laying a sideshot through the still quaking net. Emphy Bower missed a hard try, but leaped high in the air to follow it up with the score that made it Midland 8, Everett 1.

The Everett squad called a time out, and when they came out of the huddle they had abandoned their strict man-to-man defense and assumed the five-man zone spread.

With this, Midland countered by switching to their "A" court formation; forcing the defense deep with a three-man threat forward and depending on Carter and Gordon for the pointers. And the plan worked; Dan laying two through the hoops from midcourt and relaying one to Gordon for yet another score.

So far the game had been one-sided, but fast. Pop Brighton stripped his left side; sending in Blane at forward and O'Day at guard to give Wilkinson and Gordon a bit of rest. Against the weaker side, Everett rallied to pile up three court shots and a foul, but unperturbed, Pop took out his right side for a breather. He was going to win this game, if possible, under wraps. For the chances were great that there would be another, and an even tougher match, the following week.

It was in the closing minutes of the first half, with the score now at 17-10 that the entire first team once more took the field. This time, as Emphy Bower replaced Reach Rochester, Wilkinson turned to his teammates with the "Let's go!" look in his eyes.

And the Midland machine went! A bewildering maze of spheres began to whip through the rattled Everett defense as, in rapid succession, Wilkinson, Bower, and Carter added tallies for their teams. Once Hi Jenkins lobbed a desperate try from midcourt to chalk one for his team, and Dave Johns slipped an interception through

the cords for the Everett squad, but the visitors were clearly outclassed, and as the final toss-back from Bower to Carter allowed the running guard to leap high and toss one cleanly through the basket, making the score 29-16, the whistle signaled the end of the first half.

Cheers and applause followed the Green Raiders to the dressing-room, but as he and his teammates passed the stands, Dan Carter had eyes for only one of the enthusiastic rooters.

IN the locker-room, Pop Brighton was elated.

"It's practically on ice, men. The only thing that can lose this game is a miracle, or a complete collapse on your part. And I'm not expecting that. Not from the way you looked out there this first half."

Skeeter Myers burst into the dressing-room, his eyes excited.

"Got the reports on the other games, gang!"

"Well?"

"Listen to this. Craig is beating Norcross at the end of the first half. Craig 32; Norcross 6!"

There was a shocked silence for a moment; then a roar of applause amongst the squad.

"A walkaway!" shouted Jack Hapes. "They can't win now! Norcross is out of the running! How about Tech?"

Myers drew a deep breath.

"The Tech game started a half hour before ours. I have the result in the middle of the second half. Marston 19; Tech 17."

Pop nodded grimly.

"That settles it, men. We can't coast yet! If Tech beats Marston, we're still in a battle!"

Nevertheless, it was a rejuvenated squad that talked happily in the Midland locker-room during the remainder of the rest period. Norcross seemed definitely out of the running. And there was an even chance that Tech might take a licking. If both teams lost, the title was in the bag tonight. Next week's game with Norcross would be merely a gesture.

Only one member of the Midland squad was not smiling as the team climbed the stairs to the court for the second half. That one was Hal Gordon. If Norcross and Tech lost tonight, and Midland

clinched the title, the season would have passed, to all intents and purposes, without Carter ever having been satisfactorily "put in his place." And Gordon was determined to sooner or later show the country boy up. His jaw was set grimly as they re-entered the thronged gymnasium.

Pop Brighton, perfectly willing to prolong his star performers' rest, allowed the entire Midland second team to start the second half. It hardly seemed important that the Everett team, taking the floor with new determination, came through with a brand new style of technique to increase their score to 31-23 as the slow minutes ticked away. Pop knew well that when he returned his first squad later on, any increase the Everett boys made would be rapidly wiped away. And so he bided his time, resting his stellar quintet, while he kept a watchful eye out for Skeeter Myers and the news from the other two battle-fronts.

It was midway in the second half that the expected message came. Myers raced into the gym, picked up one of the huge megaphones used by the cheer-leaders, and shouted the news that all present might hear.

"The final result of the Tech-Marston game," he cried, "is—Marston 32; Tech 29!"

And then pandemonium broke loose in the Midland gym!

A FLOUNDERING Midland second team was looking hopefully toward the bench. Pop Brighton, at peace with the world now that his dream of again producing a winner had been fulfilled, nodded happily to his first-string men.

"O.K. fellows. Sew it up!"

A cheer rose from the stands as the starting five swept out onto the floor. Betty Carruthers felt a tug at her heart-strings as a lean but somehow graceful figure in shorts turned and smiled her way. He might be Gawky to his teammates, and "gawky" he might be on a football field, but on the boards his smoothness, his ease, was a marvel to behold.

Everett having just scored to make it 31-25, the Green Raiders once more put the ball into play. And for the second time that evening, the spectators sat back to enjoy the spectacle of this smooth Midland

machine exerting its full and deadly power.

Hapes keynoted the Green attack on an immediate solo that carried him into the suicide corner. Jammed there by the stubborn guard, Chumley, he tossed back to Carter who laid one 'cross-court to Wilkinson. Wilkinson's try never touched the sides of the hoop.

Jenkins brought the ball out for Everett, passed it to Dave Johns. Gordon stepped in fast and intercepted, then turned and whizzed a vicious liner to Dan Carter who was already on his way upcourt. A grimace wrinkled Carter's brow as the bounding leather burned into his palms. His shot for the basket was inches off, the ball rolling on the rim, then dropping free.

Darrah passed swiftly to Jenkins, who lifted another Everett score into the Midland hoop.

The same crowd which had, only a minute before, been whooping it up for the "wonder five" fell now into a strained silence. They sensed something wrong. Pop Brighton looked sharply at his charges. The old trouble had come to life again. The Gordon-Carter feud had been renewed. The old coach watched with growing despair as the Midland backfield, strife-ridden, fell into a rout.

Gordon's passes to Carter were all either too hard to handle or just a trifle beyond the gawky one's groping fingers. The clean defense support which had characterized the defense men's work had given way to individual playing, and as a result, Everett was sinking shots that should never have been allowed.

Wilkinson, Hapes and Bower were supporting their squad; rising above themselves to match Everett pointers with tallies of their own. But as the closing moments of the game ticked slowly on, the underdog's threat became a possibility. For the score now stood Midland 37; Everett 33.

AND then Pop Brighton made a gambling decision. He gambled on the ability of inferior players to hold that fighting Everett squad where two warring members could not. He jerked Carter and Gordon from the game, substituting Branigan and O'Day.

The combination was weak, but it held. Held well enough, at least, so that just as

the final gun sounded in the now-silent gym, the Green Raiders still managed to lead their opponents by a border-line margin.

And it was then, just as a group of victory-mad rooters swept down from the stands toward the barely triumphant Midland squad, that Hal Gordon's long-smouldering anger burst into flame, and he chose to make public the vengeful rancor that had been burning within him throughout the past weeks.

He escaped from the bench, a sneer on his lips, and clutched Dan Carter's arm.

"You certainly showed plenty of stuff on the ball tonight, Gawky!" he spat, "but it was just the kind of stuff I expected from you. Sucker stuff!"

V

CARTER turned slowly; his lean hands clenched in a tight knot.

"I'm not sure," he said slowly, "that I know what you mean, Gordon."

"Naturally not!" gibed the hot-headed guard. "A dumb cluck like you needs a diagram. Well, it's all over now, and the title's on ice, so at last I can tell you what a sucker you've been. Do you know—"

A slim figure struggled suddenly from the throng of astonished fans gathered about the pair. Betty Carruthers clutched at Gordon's arm.

"No, Hal. Not now. Please!"

"Go ahead, Gordon," ordered Carter.

"Pop!" pleaded Betty.

The veteran coach, who had been caught unawares by Gordon's sudden flare-up, suddenly regained control of his senses.

"Gordon! Carter!" he snapped. "Down to the locker-room, both of you. Make it snappy."

Obediently, both men swung toward the staircase, Hal with that belligerent sneer on his face, Carter puzzled. As the wondering crowd slowly dispersed, Betty turned to her father's friend tearfully.

"It's all my fault, Pop. I started it."

"Save it, Betty," said Pop curtly. "I've got to get down to the locker-room. Those two boys will be fighting it out if I'm not there to stop them."

He disappeared as Betty, disconsolate, sunk to the players bench. For long minutes, as the gym slowly drained its contents

of spectators, she sat there wrapped in thought. The fat was in the fire now. Pop could stem Gordon's words for a little while but sooner or later the truth must come out.

The moments ticked slowly by. It might have been ten minutes, or it might have been a half hour before the sound of approaching footsteps roused the girl from her apathy. It was Carter and by the look on his face, Betty knew that Gordon had spilled his malicious tale. The lanky guard walked slowly toward her his face stony.

"Dan!"

There was a leaden quality to his voice.

"Betty, I want you to tell me one thing. Honestly, is Gordon right? Did you make love to me, let me fall in love with you, just so I would play basketball?"

"Dan, you mustn't believe that," cried the girl desperately.

Grimly he shook her away.

"Did you?"

"At first—yes! But later—"

"Never mind." There was no anger in his voice. Just deadly weariness, hopelessness. "I can guess the rest. Never mind explaining."

"But I must explain, Dan. You *must* listen. At first it was all a gag, but afterward—"

He laughed shortly.

"The season's over, Betty. And Pop's job is safe. You needn't pretend any longer. I was a fool to think a girl like you could fall for a bird like me."

He turned on his heel and strode away as the girl stared after him helplessly, hopelessly. As the door closed behind him she found her voice, wrenched out one word,

"Dan!"

It was there that Pop Brighton found her, sobbing on the bench in the empty gym. He put his arms about her consolingly.

"Everything will be all right, Betty. He'll understand—later on."

"B-but he'll never play basketball again," sobbed the girl, "and he'll never, never believe that I really do love him now. Never!"

"He will. When he has had time to think it over. It may take a little while. And as for the basketball—well, that doesn't matter now."

He stopped short as a wild-eyed Skeeter

Myers, his hair on end, raced into the gym clutching a scrap of paper.

"Pop, listen! I just got a wire report from the Craig campus! Norcross made an uphill battle in the second half and the game went into extra time! And the final score was Norcross 41; Craig 40!"

It was Pop Brighton's turn to drop as though stricken to the bench.

A RUDDY glare threw shimmering waves of light against the ivy-clad walls of Old Main. Circled about the gigantic pep fire, more than three thousand eager Midland voices joined in the salute to their Alma Mater's near-championship team. A slim figure in white crouched, made sweeping movements with its hands and the traditional challenge of Midland's "Long M" split the night.

Tomorrow morning a trainload of determined Norcross hoopsters would roll into the little college town's station. Tomorrow night the Green and the Gold would decide, finally, the question of the conference title. And tonight, Midland campus was giving a "'thuse" to prove to their cage-stars that the student body was behind them to a man.

With the cheer-leader showing the way, the loyal sons and daughters of Midland screamed for their favorites to step forward, one at a time.

Then, at the cheerleader's sign, the demand welled up and echoed to the far corners of the campus,

"Carter! Carter! We want Carter!"

Pop Brighton, standing back from the blazing flame of the huge bonfire, shook his head at the girl by his side.

"I thought he might come forward when he heard them calling for him. But I guess he won't."

There were tears in the girl's eyes.

"I haven't seen him all week. No one has. He goes to his classes and then he disappears. I even went to his boarding house. They told me he wasn't in. It's no use, Pop. He won't let me explain."

The coach patted her hand.

"He may come back yet. He must, or else—"

He stared gloomily at the blaze. This week's practice, with Bus Brannigan and Gene O'Day futilely trying to fill the place of the missing guard, had shown all too

plainly the dependence of the Green Raiders upon the lanky boy. His was the eye that made those back-field passes good, those midcourt markers deadly. Without him, the team was just a faulty machine; a motor with one vital sparkplug missing.

"Carter! Carter! We want Carter!" cried the mob. But no Carter stepped forward.

ON the outskirts of the milling students, a lonely figure with hat pulled down and coat collar turned up, stood and watched the scene with mingled emotions. Dan Carter, his hands sunk deep into his pockets, was torn by desires such as he had never before known.

Ever since that night, almost a week ago, when he had learned from the lips of Gordon, and then from the lips of the girl he had learned to love, of the ruse that had lured him to Midland's basketball team, he had kept himself apart from the college life. His whole desire now was to finish out the semester, three weeks hence. Then he would take his credits and transfer to another college—one far from the Midland campus. A college where he could start all over again and forget.

Still, there was indecision in his mind. Sometimes he told himself that he should have waited—waited until Betty had tried to explain, anyway. He shrugged. What could she tell him? She had cheated, lied to him. And of course now that she knew there was yet another game to be played, she would try the same trick over again.

"Once a sucker, always a sucker!" he thought to himself grimly. "Well, I was a sucker once. But never again!"

The crowd, despairing at last of bringing out the missing guard, had broken into the strains of Old Midland. Their boisterous gaiety vanished suddenly as the old tune, tossed to the frosty stars by their clear young voices, became something hallowed and vital to each of them. Hats came off, and a new solemnity shone in every young face.

Dan Carter turned away, a curious choking in his throat.

SATURDAY night came, and with it a host of rooters eight thousand strong, to storm the doors of Midland's palestra. Green adherents were there, and follow-

ers of the Gold, too, for Norcross had sent a victory-hungry mob of admirers down to watch this final and deciding match. On the entire campus there was no subject of conversation but the game that night. Everyone, it seemed, was planning to be there. Everyone but little Skeeter Myers, that is.

"The life," Skeeter was complaining bitterly, "of a newspaper man is the life of a dog! While you muggs are watching the game, your beloved editor will be parking his carcass by a desk, trying to get the story ready so you can read about the game tomorrow. Nuts! I think I'll take up knitting."

Hal Gordon, getting ready to go to the gym, only laughed.

"We'll win without you watching us, Skeeter."

"Yeah, maybe," rasped the little editor almost savagely. "And if we don't I know whose fault it will be!"

Gordon's face darkened.

"What do you mean?"

"You know damned well what I mean. Newspaper editors aren't dumb, my dear fraternity brother. If Dan Carter isn't in that game—"

He stopped. After all, fraternity brothers are supposed to overlook the faults of their brethren.

IN the locker-room, Pop Brighton addressed his men briefly.

"I don't need to tell you that you're going into this game under a handicap. O'Day; Brannigan—it's up to you two to save this game. And that's a big order. All I can say is, go to it! And do your best!"

Silently the squad filed out of the dressing-room; climbed the short flight of stairs to the gymnasium. The walls and balcony were jammed with a colorful crowd whose cheers echoed and re-echoed hollowly against the walls. Already the invaders were on the court; a fast, strong looking aggregation in their gala golden jerseys.

A few minutes of practice and the game was ready to begin. The surplus players left the court. The referee took his position between the opposing centers; shrilled his whistle; tossed the sphere—and the game was on!

A wild cheer rose from the Midland

stands as Emphy Bower stole the tip-off; bounced the ball back over his shoulder to Hal Gordon. The Gold hoopsters, wary of that vaunted Green attack, hastily swept downcourt to defense positions. Gordon, smiling confidently, ran the ball to mid-field, make a lightning pass to Bower at pivot position. The towering centerman spotted the basket; spun the ball through—2 to 0!

The Gold put the ball into play; came up out of their court in a box-four formation. Hunk Kolsky, their pivot-guard, remained in the Norcross court as Miller and Easton, the two forwards, box-passed the leather around between themselves and back to center Beano Brophy and the Gold running-guard, Lafe Arbogast.

Bower cagily closed in on Brophy as the opposing center back-tapped the ball to Wally Easton. Easton took it down the sideline, then whisked it to his running mate, Tom Miller. Hal Gordon smothered Miller, who spotted the leather back to Easton.

The flashy left forward came in fast, took the ball on the bounce, and without touching the wood, placed it through the hoops. Tie score!

Once again the Green Raiders brought the ball out. This time the play was the "teaser"—forwards in, and the ball back to Gordon from Wilkinson. But wary Tom Miller was covering Gordon, and the right guard turned and spun the leather to his teammate. O'Day let the ball smack his palms, then bounce out. As he went to retrieve it, his knee struck it. It rolled over the sideline as the ref droned, "Out-side, Norcross!"

Easton tossed in to Miller; then turned and raced to a basket post. Miller's relay was perfect, and the left forward had only to leap lightly and tap the ball through the hoop.

O'Day, rattled, closed in too fast on his man the next time, after Easton had intercepted a relay from Bower, and face-blocked the Gold front-line man just as he shot. The ref awarded two tries to the fouled man, and with calm aplomb, Easton laid them both through the cords. This was Easton's night! Already the Gold had found the weak spot in their opponents' defense, and they were capitalizing on it heavily. And the score mounted little by

little, as the first half moved along all too speedily for the stupefied Midland rooters.

SKETER MYERS, seated in the office of the college daily, scratched angrily on a deskpad as he listened to the reporter on the other end of the wire.

"What's that? 13 to 4 for Norcross! What the hell kind of a lead can I write if those bums are going to *beat* our boys? Eh? 15 to—say, listen, Bill, you're breaking my heart! Call me again at the end of the half! Yeah. So long!"

Moodily, the editor slapped up the receiver. He drew a long gust of smoke into his lungs, then grabbed his hat from the desk.

"I'm going to go down to the Den," he growled to a sophomore reporter, "and drown my sorrows in a cup of Java. Stay near the phone in case Bill McGhee calls again."

HE banged into the Den, slamming the door behind him. A quiet figure seated at one of the tables looked up as he entered; then lowered his head. Skeeter's eyes narrowed. Dan Carter. Briskly he approached the ex-guard's table, sat down.

"Have you heard about the game, Carter?" he began abruptly.

The lanky lad avoided his eyes.

"I'm not interested, Myers."

"Not interested hell!" exploded the editor. "It's still in the first half and the score is 15 to 4 in Norcross' favor. Doesn't that interest you?"

A momentary flame flickered across Carter's eyes; then died slowly.

"Sorry," he said curtly. "I'm through with basketball."

"Look here, Carter. If you're just staying out of the game because of that Betty Carruthers business—"

Carter rose suddenly, pushing the table back in his anger.

"I came here to be alone, Myers. When I want your snooping advice I'll ask for it. Now, will you get out of here, or shall I?"

There was a sudden dominance in the little man's purpose that made him taller, commanding. He rose to face the basketball player.

"Shut up, Carter, and stop being a fool!" he shouted. "This is one time I'm going

to talk, and you're going to listen! Now the whole thing started this way—"

Shocked into silence, Dan Carter listened as the editor unloaded the knowledge that had reached his ears through a hundred campus sources. And as the Skeeter spoke, suddenly everything loomed clearer and clearer in Carter's eyes.

"You're right, Skeeter!" he cried.

His last words were lost in the crashing of the door as he disappeared across the darkened campus toward the lighted windows of the gym. From behind the counter, the manager of the Den roared in protest.

"Hey, you! My money! You didn't pay."

There was a broad grin on Skeeter Myers' face as he tossed a crumpled bill at the owner.

"Keep the change, Mike! I think we can charge this one up to news breaks! Ee-gip-ow-ee!"

A MOMENT before there had been deathly silence in the Green Raiders' locker-room, silence born of defeat already acknowledged. Now, suddenly, a wild yell of delight split the steamy air as Dan Carter, wild-eyed and anxious, crashed into the room to claw at his locker with eager fingers.

"How much time've we got!" he panted. "What's the score. Quick, somebody, give me a hand with this locker!"

A roar greeted his words. But with moments to spare, Dan Carter recognized that there was still other unfinished business to attend to. He strode over to where Hal Gordon, sulky and rebellious, sat glowering at him.

"You're a rat, Gordon!" he blazed. "But Midland needs you to win this game! Do you want your licking now, or after the game?"

In reply, the rival guard swung a short, jabbing right at Carter's jaw. Dan ducked beneath it, and came up with a smashing uppercut to Gordon's chin. The other man's knees crumpled, and he slipped to the floor. Carter strode back to his bench without a backward glance.

"We'll play without him!" he snarled. "And we'll win, too!"

A hoarse cheer of delight greeted the Midland squad as it raced up, burning

with a new fighting spirit, out of the locker-room for the beginning of the second half. From her seat in the stands, Betty Carruthers looked once, then gasped incredulously as she recognized the lean, hard figure of Dan Carter in Midland's Green. The crowd recognized him too, and new hope swept over the Midland rooters. Carter was back! This game wasn't over yet!

A purposeful hush fell over the palestra as the two teams lined up for the tip-off. Bower, a mightier center than ever before, literally seemed to tear the ball away from Brophy on the toss, and slashed it back to Carter. Carter zoomed it to Wilkinson—and before the Gold could even get set the score was 19 to 8!

And then the mob went hoarse with screaming delight as the rejuvenated Green squad fought the battle of its career; a smashing, charging battle that pushed the Gold back into the shadow of its own basket time after time, to slowly but inevitably grope the score to 19-10, 19-12, 19-14.

But every team has its level—and the level of even this inspired squad was not up to that of the power of Midland's complete five. And with that beggardly five-point margin to overcome, Midland's blazing attack stymied. Norcross, discovering the new weak spot at right guard, pushed through Bus Brannigan twice to raise their lead, lost the increased points on a flip by Wilkinson and a long toss by Carter, and there the game stalled. As the precious minutes of the second and final half moved inexorably onward, the Green and the Gold zig-zagged back and forth to remain locked with that five point difference.

Pop Brighton, his heart sick with the knowledge that this game, under different circumstances, might have been won, sat staring at his stop-watch.

And then a hand, cold and desperate, was clutching at the coach's shoulder. Hal Gordon—and in his red-rimmed eyes there was a curious pleading look.

"Pop! They can't win without me! Put me in there!"

Pop Brighton hesitated briefly. On the court, a surprised Midland squad, seeing Gordon stumble up from the locker-room, had called a time out. They were huddled there now, watching the tense drama at the bench with questioning eyes.

"You've got to, Pop!" Gordon pleaded. The old coach nodded.

"All right. Go ahead, Gordon!"

The guard dashed in as Brannigan came out. As he took his position, Dan Carter glanced at him thoughtfully. If Gordon tried any of his funny stuff now it was all over!

Then the Gold warriors were racing the ball downcourt; pressing back the Green front line. Empty Bower covered the first offense man coming into the near court; forced him to toss to Arbogast. Jack Hapes slipped in before the toss. He wheeled and found the basket blocked; passed between his legs to Gordon. And as speedy Tom Miller closed on the guard, Dan Carter knew that the test had come! What would Gordon do! Would his pass be too high? Too low? Hard?

Then it came, directly at him! And as the leather met his hands smoothly, easily, he was off down the court like a streak of green lightning! Eluding his guard; twisting, turning, to flash the ball to uncovered Slip Wilkinson. And Wilkinson laid the apple right through the meshes as the crowd shrieked deliriously. Norcross 27—Midland 26!

It was Norcross' time to put the ball in play. As Brophy took the ball, the hand of the timekeeper crept toward the gun on the table. He was watching the moments that crept by closely. Only a fraction of a minute now! And Norcross, fearful of this revived Green squad, was taking no chances. They brought the ball up, oh, so slowly, barely getting it out of their territory in regulation time and began to inch it cannily, warily, toward midcourt!

Desperately, Dan Carter lashed out of his defense position! They mustn't freeze that ball! The whole game depended on these last seconds of play!

Like a ravaging wolf, he flung himself upon the ball-dribbler, Brophy. Brophy, startled as the long-legged guard closed suddenly in on him, tossed backward toward Arbogast and safety! Dan Carter, his feet sliding beneath him, reached out in a desperate lunge for the ball. The smooth leather just touched his finger-tips, hovered there an instant—and it was a free ball, skittering sidewise to the edge of the court!

In a flash, Carter was back on his feet. The dismayed Brophy had deserted him, racing after the ball. Tom Miller was after it, too. And Hal Gordon. But it was Gordon's fingers that clasped the sphere first, and lifted it in a mighty heave to his running-mate. Dan Carter had no time to crouch. His arms moved like twin pistons, even as a resounding roar boomed through the palestra. The gun!

And the ball! It struck the backboard glancingly; teetered, hit the outside rim of the basket, and then, as a tomblike silence engulfed the open-mouthed spectators, it fell backward through the hoop!

It was then that bedlam broke loose!

ONCE again the gym was empty. Outside, a throng of admiring Midland rooters waited for its court heroes to appear, but the young couple standing together in the palestra had no ears for any voices but their own.

"You must understand, Dan," the girl was pleading. "Hal Gordon was right. At first it was all a joke but then when I got to know you better—"

Dan Carter leaned over and stopped her explanation in what seemed to him the best and most effective way.

"I do understand now, dear," he said. "If I had been less stubborn I would have understood before."

Another figure was approaching them across the boards. Hal Gordon, smiling sheepishly. He held out his hand to his running-mate.

"Dan," he began, "I don't know what to say."

"Then don't bother, Hal," grinned Carter. "Anyway, you said it a little while ago—in actions. Let's forget the whole thing. I'm sorry about that poke."

"I'm not," confessed Gordon, ruefully feeling his jaw. "It woke me up to a lot of things. One of them is that it's not safe to let a guy with a wallop like that run around loose. As soon as you're free, I wish you'd come down to the Phi Tau house again. The boys have something to ask you."

Betty Carruthers smiled softly.

"Dan can go to the Phi Tau house any time he wants to, Hal," she said. "But he's never going to be *free* again!"

100% Grandstander

By GLENN LONG

Bronson was a born grandstander! Give him a gallery of shrieking fans and he was a hard-wood riot—without it his razzle-dazzle magic was a sure-fire flop!

IRVIN LOOFBURROW, manager and coach of the Morganville Red Lanterns, swaggered down the midway at the county fair in mid-September, nattily clad and confident, as usual, that he was what it took to make girlish hearts beat faster. Yet, despite this, his mind reverted with disturbing frequency to problems of basketball. One matter, especially, the acquisition of a high caliber forward, was taking the spring from his step and causing purple giraffes to dance on his bedposts during sleeping hours.

At Loofie's side, towering nearly a foot above him, strode Stretch Warren, his star cen-



ter. In press notices, Loofie told the bewildered world that the pink-cheeked, yellow-haired Stretch could stand flat-footed and lick paint off the Morganville courthouse clock, a slight exaggeration, even though Stretch was 17 feet seven in his thinnest socks. But Stretch was a household name to basketball and he worked hand-in-glove with handsome Loofie to outwit the sometimes unscrupulous Jasper Marsden, of Brownstown, and maintain the Red Lanterns as the independent basketball champions of the state.

He now scowled as he swung along.

"We certainly will need a good forward, and need him bad," he said.

"Ow-oo-oo. You mention *that* while I pursue diversion at this Seventy-third Annual Morgan County Vegetable, Fruit, Grain, Poultry and Livestock Exposition," howled Loofie, who prided himself on his ability to make two syllables grow where only one grew before. "Let us banish our multiple basketball sorrows and woo the charming Mademoiselle Luck at yonder emporium of light artillery."

They invested fifty cents each at the shooting gallery before concluding Lady Luck was not interested in being wooed that way.

"If we had a basketball hoop to shoot at, instead of a duck, we might get somewhere," exclaimed Stretch in disgust.

"Verily, verily," quoth Loofie, as they stepped back into the milling crowd.

But the speculative instant had fast hold upon Loofie.

"Stretch," he said, "I proclaim to you that, as you would crudely say, this is my lucky day. How are you disposed toward the projection of a few spheroids at the Ethiopian bambinos?"

"Oke."

The two flung baseballs at black rag dolls until their capital investment amounted to one dollar and fifty cents, and their total returns, one brown and white china pig penny bank, won by Loofie.

Loofie paid the final instalment on this profitless enterprise as Stretch stepped back toward the current of the crowd. The dapper manager picked up his change and the china pig which, he reflected, might do as bait to catch a blonde, and swung on his heel in pursuit of his giant pivot man. As he drew alongside, Stretch gave one

look at the china pig and felt a twitching of his heart. That pig, which retailed for a dime at any five-and-ten, now represented a total outlay of two dollars and fifty cents.

Stretch mourned, "If we could only throw basketba—"

He stopped in his tracks and stared. Loofie stopped in his tracks and stared. Then they stared at each other.

"At last." Loofie reverently breathed. "Santa Claus, we are present."

FORTY feet ahead of them was a basketball backboard with hoop and net, and before it, basketball poised on his fingertips, was a wiry young six-footer calling, "Three shots for a dime, folks. Three shots for a dime. Try your hand at the great American indoor sport. Win a souvenir Arabian horse, win an elephant, win a lion, win a great big beautiful kewpie doll with eyes like Greta Garbo."

Loofie slithered through the crowd and smacked down a dollar bill upon the counter before the young man. He nodded to Stretch.

"Assume control of the ceremonies, up to, and including, a valuation of one dollar and no cents."

Stretch reached for the basketball and asked, "What are the rules?"

"Three baskets out of three attempts, and take your choice of souvenirs," said the young man. "It's a regulation foul line shot and no preliminary throws."

Stretch made nine baskets in a row. He missed one out of his next three, then shot six straight, and turned around to behold a gathering audience. It recognized him and numerous persons called out:

"Atta boy, Stretch! Break the bank. Close him up! Start in business for yourself."

Loofie saw the publicity value for Stretch and the Red Lanterns. Stretch bowed to the cheers of the impromptu gallery. When he had finished the dollar's worth of shots, he had seven prizes. Loofie tossed down another dollar.

The young man running the game protested further shooting by Stretch. The crowd booed and threatened, "Yellow! Run him out! Can't take it, eh? It's all right when the other fellow's losin', ain't it? Let him shoot or take down your

stand. Come on, guys, let's tear down the place.

The young man, unperturbed by the threats, finally accepted Loofie's dollar, with a faint smile. The crowd roared as Stretch took eight more prizes, leaving the operator of the game only three.

Loofie tossed out a half-dollar and the crowd screamed, "Break him! Send him to the poor farm. Run him off the grounds."

In response to the Roman Holiday spirit, Stretch won the remaining three prizes on four tries. Loofie felt a pang of sympathy for the young man running the game but after a quick appraisal decided there was no occasion for condolences. Merriment shone in the youth's clear, blue eyes and he held his head as one who had taken life on the chin many a time, yet, was not even groggy as he waded in for more.

Stretch surveyed the pile of statuary before him.

"Heck," he said. "What'll we do with them?"

"Mayhap," Loofie suggested, looking at the operator, "mayhap a satisfactory pecuniary arrangement can be negotiated for their return to the immediate previous possessor."

The immediate previous possessor shrugged.

"I don't want 'em. I have a whole truck load."

He surveyed the crowd about his stand, the largest by far that his game had ever attracted. It gave him a deep thrill of satisfaction.

"Tell you what I'll do," he said to Stretch. "I'll shoot you double or nothing. We'll see who can make the most baskets in a row. If you win, I'll duplicate every prize you have. If I win, you'll give 'em all back."

LOOFIE now felt he was the one who should protest, but the crowd was cheering and he saw it would not be the popular thing to do. Stretch had to accept the challenge, which Loofie knew in his heart was a gross mistake. He saw all that stack of prizes taking wings and affectionately gripped his china pig. In a moment that homely pig would be representing an investment of four dollars and

ninety cents. And he had proclaimed this was his lucky day!

Stretch made sixteen baskets before the strain got him. His seventeenth even missed the hoop.

His challenger recovered the ball, and with a casual smile surveyed the throng which still was cheering Stretch. The cheers died as the confident air and unwavering calm of the youth captivated his audience. It waited breathlessly. And it saw the youngster toss off sixteen shots, to match Stretch's, with the precision of a machine. They rustled the net like a light breeze, never even touching the hoop. Then, he calmly pushed in the winning shot with his right hand.

The crowd, that had been so antagonistic so short a time before, howled its delight, inspiring the young man to a demonstration of real wizardry. While the onlookers gasped, he tipped in shots with his wrists, elbows and forehead, he banked them from all angles, he made the ball race half a dozen times around the iron and come to a complete stop before falling through. In fact, he made that basketball do everything but croon a blues song.

Finally, he missed on his thirty-second shot which was the last of three he assayed to make while blindfolded. And he missed that one only after it had circled the hoop three times and poised on the brink practically long enough for lunch.

"Wow!" chorused the crowd.

Loofie, who had risen from the depths to the heights, rang in with, "Wow-wow-wow-wow," true to his penchant for raising more syllables than anybody else. Success was written upon his brow and he felt future generations would list him next to Columbus as a discoverer. He socked Stretch in the ribs.

"Did I not inform you," he cried, "that this was my fortunate day?"

He pointed to the youth with the basketball.

"Behold the new super-phenomenal forward of the Morganville Red Lanterns."

THERE was no joy in the neighboring city of Brownstown when Loofie sent them word that Morganville had signed up for the coming season a new forward named Bunny Bronson who could stand with his hands behind him and shoot

baskets with his ears. Jap Marsden, who managed the Brownstown Merchants and felt all was fair in basketball, as long as he was doing it, went about for a week slamming doors and frightening small children. The remote trouble was that Morganville had displaced Brownstown in recent years as the basketball capital of the state. But the immediate difficulty had to do with the fact that, after being nosed out last year for the state championship, in an overtime game, Jap had put out perfectly good personally owned cash to lure Jingles Denglemyer, star forward, away from the Red Lanterns. He was successful in getting Denglemyer but it was now all too evident that he merely had taken one good forward away from the Lanterns to make room for a better one.

Loofie Loofburrow daily laughed riotously and his raucous guffaws were more than Jap's ears could bear. Jap groaned and moaned like a newly orphaned calf, but everyone knew that although he could become more deeply buried in gloom than a centipede with ninety-nine broken arches, he invariably bounced back to carry his and Brownstown's spirits to new altitudes of optimism.

High-handedly, Jap had ruled independent basketball for years before Morganville, in sheer wrath and civic pride, arose and smote him down. He was a sharp, icy-eyed trickster, not averse to very low comedy. Yet, he always gave the customers a run for their money and everyone knew the sure way to the state championship was to beat Brownstown.

Morganville started the current year with that idea in mind, and in an early game on their home floor, took the Merchants to the tune of 36-21 before a capacity crowd that had turned out to see the new super-player, Bunny Bronson, toss everything through the basket but the timekeeper's watch.

As the crowd went wild, Bunny went wilder. Tall, trim, tireless, a veritable human greyhound, he covered every square inch of the court and to the astounded spectators appeared to have some miraculous knack of being in no less than three places at once. In one smooth, unbroken flow of motion, he would take a ball off the enemy backboard, pass to a fellow Lantern, take a return pass at mid-floor, pass again

and then bound under the basket to contact the ball for a lightning tip-in and raise the Red Lantern score two more points and the temperature of the crowd two more degrees.

Jap Marsden chewed his tongue and moaned as it became evident early in the game that the Merchants had no more chance of victory than a cow has to out-fly Lindbergh.

"Bunny Bronson. Bronson," Jap muttered. "Where have I heard that name before? That boy's not hot, he's torrid. They must warm him up in an electric furnace."

HEARTS beat high in Morganville as the Red Lanterns clowned through four more victories. Citizens dreamed of a fifth state championship which would give them permanent possession of the huge James C. Parrott gold cup for which independent teams had battled a decade and a half. With a forward like Bunny Bronson and a center like Stretch Warren, how could they lose?

Then, as if fate were showing them how they could lose, Bunny Bronson slumped worse than two stock markets. In a game against the Erie Roundhousers, which Bunny should have won by himself, he was held to four points, a field goal and two free throws. The fans decided he was merely coasting but Loofie Loofburrow's eagle eye detected something radically wrong although he was unable to diagnose it.

Three nights later against the equally weak Green Valley Creamery quintet, Bunny was just as bad, again making but one field goal although he managed to amass three foul tosses. The following week he connected for three field goals against the Capitol City Power and Light cagers but was obviously listless and disinterested.

Loofie was about to conclude Lady Luck had lifted him to the stratosphere only to let him loose without a parachute when the topnotch Gilderson Packers steamed into Morganville to play to a packed house. Bunny bounced back into form as suddenly as he had slumped and scored twenty-seven points in a 35-31 victory. The strongest hearts in Morganville were two days in returning to normal. It was such an outstanding exhibition of the hardwood game

as it should be hardwooded that Loofie paid no heed when Bunny slumped again against the Holloway Electrics and hit an all-time low of one field goal and one charity marker.

But if Loofie was asleep, not so Jap Marsden.

"Where there's rhyme, there's reason, and I'll figure it out eventually if not now," he told Gabby Bordner, elongated co-angel of the Merchants who had sunk so much cash on them his wife was threatening to run away with a relief worker so she'd again have money to spend.

A FEW days later Jap burst into Gabby's Auto Service Shoppe filled with joy and sunshine.

"I have it! I have it!" he shouted.

"St. Vitus' Dance?" asked Gabby.

"Well, it ain't sleeping sickness. I'm wide awake, always. And I have solved the mystery of Bunny Bronson. He is a one hundred percent grandstander."

"He made us look like one hundred percent bums."

"Trust me that he'll never do it again."

"Yeah? Oh, yeah?"

"Yeah, oh yeah. Take a look at this."

Jap thrust a chart in front of Gabby which had all the scores of the Morganville games, plus the attendance at each, plus the individual scoring records of Bunny Bronson.

"Look here," he said, "a packed house against us at Morganville and Bunny scores twenty-one points. Twelve hundred at the Big Four game and he goes through for nineteen points, and so on with the big crowds. But now, look here against those floundering Erie Roundhousers. Attendance three hundred, and four points for Bunny. Against Green Valley, attendance two fifty with our hero scoring five points. Then, back in Morganville again for the Gilderson Packers, another houseful of maniacs and Bunny hits for twenty-seven points while covering the floor like a circus tent and still finding ample time to keep his eye on two brunettes and a blonde in the galleries."

"The lad is a genius," said Gabby.

"Yes, darn it! But look at this game against the Holloway Electrics. The attendance wasn't as big as the score and Bunny sank to three points. It's simple."

"Yes, it's even idiotic, not to mention half-witted."

"It'll be master intelligence when it has brought a state championship again to Old Brownstown. Gabby, have you no imagination?"

"Jap, you'd be astonished at my imagination. It's amazing, stupendous, colossal. The only trouble is, it never coincides with the scorekeeper's card after the timekeeper's final gun has done its stuff, if you get my meaning."

A sad expression came over Jap's face for a moment.

"I know, old pal, I know. Boy, how I know! That Lousy Loofie and his Morganville Red Lanterns!"

Jap floundered only a moment in the depths of bitter memories and then was off again and zooming.

"But this is our year. Our next game with the Lanterns is on our floor, and we are also host to the state tournament. We can't be beat. We can't be beat. We can't be beat!"

"Hurrah, we can't be beat! That'll be front page stuff in Morganville, like a flea having dogs."

"All right, be a pessimist and enjoy it while you can. But listen, we'll win against old Morganville, not with our team, but with our spectators. We'll keep them at home. Then, we'll send word to Morganville that the tickets are all sold out and they'll stay at home. Bunny Bronson won't have no gallery to play to and he won't make any points to speak of and—"

"What about Stretch Warren?"

"Oh, him? Lanky Morrow is almost as good as him and this time we'll pull Brick Stanton over from his usual guard duty over Bronson and let him take care of Stretch while Lanky is free to have a field day."

Gabby Bordner scratched the back of his neck which was his highly individual way of saying he was virtually sold on the idea.

"If Bunny really is a grandstander, maybe it will work," he admitted.

"If he really is a grandstander! He can't help being one. I've looked up his past. Do you have any idea who his father was?"

Gabby didn't have, so Jap unfolded the whole story which made his theory of defeating Morganville all the more plausible.

MORGANVILLE contemplated destruction by heavy artillery, gas attack and air raid when word first came that the Brownstown gymnasium was already sold out for the Merchant-Red Lanterns game there.

Daffy Wilkerson, Morganville's all-American basketball fan, headed an indignation committee of one and investigated by long distance telephone. He heard Jap Marsden's sweet-voiced stenographer coo, "No, Mr. Wilkerson, there are no seats left. No, there isn't even standing room only. I guess you'll have to watch the game over the radio. I am so-o-o-o sorry."

For fully ten minutes Daffy was voiceless. He tramped over the courthouse lawn making signs with his hands and funny noises with his mouth. When speech returned, he delivered such an eruption as the world had not known since Vesuvius covered up Pompeii and Herculaneum. But it didn't get him a ticket to the combat. Even when he made a personal trip to Brownstown and explained he hadn't missed a basketball game since Victoria was Queen of England, all he got was a blue-eyed smile and a soft "So-o-o-o-o sorry" which did not turneth away wrath.

Jap told Gabby Bordner about it and Gabby said, "I'm thinking maybe you are pulling this one too soon. You can keep Morganville away from this game, but they'll find out about it and be roaring mad, and how'll you keep them away from the state tournament which, after all, is what really counts."

Jap tapped his high forehead.

"Ha, the old master mind. I have already thought it out. Fear not and be of good cheer."

Which, and a smile, was all the satisfaction Gabby received at that hearing.

TWO evenings later the great battle with the Lanterns opened up under circumstances as strange as ever attended any basketball game. Less than two hundred favored citizens were in the Brownstown gymnasium with its seating capacity of thirty-five hundred. In Brownstown homes, two thousand fans who had purchased perfectly good tickets to the game were sacrificing the high privilege of being eye witnesses on the personal assurance of Jap Marsden that he would bring victory

to Brownstown if they remained homebodies for the evening and got the glad tidings over their radios. Twenty miles away in Morganville, an almost equal number of hardwood bugs were tuning up their radios for the game, unaware they were being out-smarted by the master mind of Brownstown.

But out-smarted they were, and Jap Marsden became a prophet with honor in his own metropolis. He prophesied a victory, and a victory he got. Bunny Bronson played like a slow motion movie. He made one basket in the first quarter. When he went through the entire second quarter without as much as a shot at the hoop, Loofie Loofburrow, in disgust and dismay, withdrew him from the game and sent in Phil Kennedy whose only improvement over Bunny lay in the fact that he appeared to be *trying*, at least, to play basketball.

By virtue of phenomenal floorwork and exceptional accuracy, Stretch Warren kept the Lanterns in the game during the first half. It ended 14-12 in favor of the Merchants. Stretch had hit five baskets out of seven shots, which was too good to last, and there was a limit to the number of times he could propel his giant carcass the length and breadth of the floor at winning speed.

Midway in the third quarter, Stretch slowed down and that smeared the old handwriting right across the gymnasium wall. The Merchants immediately opened up a 29-15 lead and won going away by a score of 41-19 over a Lanterns squad that floundered through the last quarter, thoroughly demoralized.

Brownstown residences poured basketball fans by the score into the streets, even before the final gun, and the mayor headed a mammoth parade celebrating the first Brownstown victory over Morganville in five seasons. And still, all Morganville, including Coach Loofburrow, went to bed not realizing how the triumph had been accomplished.

LOOFIE went to work at once to find causes for the pathetic showing of the great Bunny Bronson.

"Bunny," he said, "you desire Morganville to acquire another state title and that golden trophy, do you not?"

"Of course I do."

"Then impart to me the reason for your deviations from winning form. Some mysterious power seems to drain from you all your natural vitality upon certain occasions. Can't you fight? Can't you evince the ancient varsity spirit? Can't you do and die for Dear Old Alma Mater? You are always reluctant to talk of your past, but of course, you do have an Alma Mater some place. With your ability you could not have escaped being lured to some institution of higher learning, ostensibly for the improvement of your immortal intellect."

Bunny grinned.

"Sorry, I never went to college. All I ever did and died for was Dear Old Alma Public. And when Alma didn't pay, I didn't die. Why, if I hadn't had the biggest audience of my life that day at the county fair, I never would have shot baskets the way I did against Stretch. I know, it's not the proper spirit but—well, I guess I'll begin at the beginning. My father was Rabbit Bronson."

"The Rabbit Bronson, basketball's greatest player of twenty-five years ago?"

"The Rabbit Bronson."

"Rabbit Bronson. Bunny Bronson. How superbly dumb of me not to have associated the names."

"No doubt. Jap Marsden asked me a month ago whether I was not the son of Rabbit Bronson. Dad was a great actor, a great guy to play to the galleries. He became an actor, on the stage, and then the movies took him. We were wealthy, and I had private tutors—until Dad died and misfortune swept away our money. Out of the wreck, I salvaged that basketball game you saw me with at the fair. Dad had invented it years before, and always kept it. Sentimental. Basketball was his first love, before the stage and the movies. And Mother and I have toured the fairs and made a living with it since I was sixteen."

"When the crowds were interested, I put on exhibitions of fancy shots. I guess I'm an actor like Dad. I liked to spellbind the people. If they weren't interested, neither was I. And now it's a habit. I can't shake it. No crowd, no performance. Look at the scores and you'll see I always had my bad nights when there were small crowds. Fill me up a gymnasium, give me Stretch Warren to take the tip-off, and

I'll beat Brownstown any night in the week."

Loofie whistled and then went through strange mutterings that sounded very much like cuss-words.

"Are you," he asked, "of the opinion that Jap Marsden penetrated your secret?"

"Sure. The Brownstown players kidded me about it."

Loofie arose to his full height and raised his hand like an old Greek taking a vow before his favorite god.

"Never," he intoned, "never shall it transpire again. I will buy a thousand tickets myself and present them in the highways and hedges ere we do without a public. *Your* Alma Public, Bunny Bronson."

Then, he clenched his fist and shook it in the direction of Brownstown. "Vengeance shall be mine, Jasper Marsden."

LOOFIE was alert as final arrangements were made for the state tournament in Brownstown. He insisted that Morganville get a full allotment of tickets which, in view of her standing in independent circles, plus the virulence of the basketball virus which incubated within her citizens, resulted in an apportionment of eight hundred.

The time came on a warm, misty Saturday in mid-March. The Merchants and the Lanterns had waded through their games on Friday and were headed for the finals in much the fashion they had headed in that direction the year before. And, as all the Lanterns showed top form, and there were eight hundred tickets in the pockets of Morganville fans, Loofie Loofburrow, with his squad, retired Friday night in a Brownstown hotel to dream pleasant dreams.

At ten o'clock the next morning Loofie received a long distance telephone call from Morganville.

"Loofie!" shouted that star rooter, Daffy Wilkerson, "we are under quarantine."

"Well."

"Well? Say, Goof, don't you realize that means we can't get our delegation out to see Bunny perform? And when Brownstown hears about it, they'll probably call off their delegation which will mean the final game will be played before practically empty seats."

Loofie felt cold chills do a marathon up and down his spin. He lost all appetite for six cylinder words and shouted back at Daffy, "Don't stand there and talk. Do something. We have a game in fifteen minutes."

His voice trailed away into the mournful tones of a Missouri hound-dawg bay-ing at the moon.

At noon Daffy called back.

"Loofie, I can't do a thing. Doc Ochil-tree says there are four cases of scarlet fever in town and he's county doctor. He says this damp weather is just the thing for spreading the disease, and he swears every man who goes to Brownstown for the game tonight will get fined fifty dollars. Personally, I'm going to pay my fifty and see the game but not a dozen others can afford it."

"Say," yelled Loofie, again forsaking his polysyllables, "four cases of scarlet fever ain't no epidemic. And you tell Doc Ochil-tree I said so."

"Suppose you tell him. He left an hour ago for a week-end visit in Cincinnati."

"You mean even *he* ain't coming to the finals tonight?"

"Not unless the finals are played in Cincinnati."

"He's a traitor. Why, that's treason. That's anarchy. That's— Great Jumping Sacred Cows. Doc Ochil-tree has practiced medicine in Morganville for twenty years, but he was born in Brownstown, Jap Marsden has pulled something crooked. Doc Ochil-tree is a gangster and a highway-man. Call the state health department and make them lift the quarantine. We have another game at one-thirty. Ow-oo-oo-oo."

Loofie forgot a little of his misery as the Lanterns romped through their semi-final game, after which the agony came back, double-strength. All he had to think about until the final game at eight o'clock was the absolute certainty of losing it and the championship unless Bunny Bronson had a big gallery to play to.

At five o'clock he had another call from Daffy.

"The state health officer says he couldn't lift the quarantine without making a personal investigation and his week's work was up at noon. I guess he's under a code of some kind, too. Loofie, we're out-smarted."

"We? Who? Say, any time Jap Marsden out-smarts me, I hope to be the three little pigs and get eaten up by the big bad wolf."

"Well, do something."

"I am, but I ain't telling you about it over the telephone and take a chance on some Brownstown operator overhearing my plan. I'll see you at the corner drug-store in thirty minutes."

All known speed records were broken as Loofie went back to Morganville, and in less than an hour a great peace had descended upon his soul and Daffy's. Let Brownstown do its worst.

Long before the game began, Loofie knew the quarantine was a part of a plot to bind the basketshooting arms of the mighty Bunny Bronson. Brownstown people were not pouring into the gymnasium. Once more they were at home dialing the local station on their radio. And with Morganville's delegation absent, there were less than five hundred spectators in the gymnasium at the referee's opening whistle.

And that made Bunny Bronson a dub.

The first quarter ended 9-7 in favor of the Merchants. Jap Marsden howled gleefully and pounded Gabby Bordner upon the back. Then he turned around and let Gabby pound him.

Loofie Loofburrow paced along the sideline muttering, "Why don't they come? Why don't they come?"

At any rate, they didn't come, and the Merchants bounded off the floor at the end of the first half leading 22-12. Loofie, stunned, sat gazing at a pair of pink elephants playing tag on the backs of a row of empty seats high in the galleries, muttering the while, "Oh, why don't they come?" Bunny Bronson had not scored a point.

THE second half was less than a minute old when the eerie whine of a fire siren brought Loofie to life. It was the hook and ladder outfit from Morganville. A few seconds later, at an open window high in the east end of the gym, two rungs of a ladder appeared, immediately followed by the full-moon face of Daffy Wilkerson. He looked at the score board and waved a signal. What sounded like forty thousand automobile horns broke loose.

When the noise had died down, Daffy roared in a voice that resembled the mating call of a foghorn, "Come on you Red Lanterns. They tried to keep us away. Jap Marsden won't let us in the gym but the whole cockeyed town of Morganville is present and from in here I give them a play-by-play account of the game."

A stranger, viewing the crowd outside, would have concluded Morganville had but a dozen citizens, all male, and one loudspeaker. But those inside, naturally, judged the crowd by the volume of the loudspeaker which had been stepped up to sound like the voice of Chicago, just as Loofie had planned.

Stretch Warren heard the booming voices and intercepted a pass in mid-air, tipping it to Bunny.

Daffy called to those outside, "Stretch has passed to Bunny. Bunny is dribbling under the basket. He shoots. IT'S GOOD!"

And that was the detailed account of the next four plays as the Lanterns pulled up their score to make the count 22-20. The Morganville loudspeaker roared until the gymnasium windows rattled like a parade of 1910 flivvers. Bunny was hot and getting hotter. Jap Marsden was getting hotter, too, but not in the same way.

The Merchants finally got the ball on an out-of-bounds play and Jingels Denglemyer dropped one in from mid-floor to make the score 24-20.

On the next play, Stretch soared into the air and intercepted a pass. Pivoting quickly he arched it to Bunny.

Swish.

Bunny seemed merely to wave at the ball as it passed him and it rustled the net for two more points. Daffy Wilkerson and the loudspeaker roared the way Niagara would like to. Thirty seconds later the score was knotted and Jap Marsden saw another championship eluding him. He stopped the game while policemen ordered Daffy Wilkerson down from his high perch and threatened arrest for disturbance of the peace if so much as one small peep came out of the loudspeaker again.

"Now, let's see your Bunny Bronson shoot baskets," Jap sneered at Loofie as the game was resumed.

Bunny, for a moment, stood in a trance,

sweeping the three thousand vacant seats with his eyes. Then, with bewildering speed, he scored twice from the field and the Lanterns had a 28-24 lead which they increased by three more points as the third quarter ended.

The final period was one long pain for Jap Marsden. Stretch and Bunny shot baskets until the scorekeeper was writer's cramp and the radio announcer had knots in his tongue. The Morganville delegation crashed into the gym when the doorkeepers became too sick to offer resistance. Jap Marsden shriveled up a little smaller with each Red Lantern basket until by the time the final gun ended the game, with the score 51-27, he was trying to hide under a chewing gum wrapper.

LOOFIE'S heart was brave and valiant once more though his knees still wobbled from earlier events of the day and evening. He grabbed Bunny by the hand, croaking eight-tube words once more.

"Wonderful, son. Magnificent. And now I must confess duplicity. It was not Morganville in its entirety outside there, but merely a dozen staunch supporters, resigned to the payment of fifty-dollar fines that we might annex another championship. Their combined voices were amplified by a loudspeaker. I regret to have deceived you, but I doubted not you would perform or succumb for Dear Old Alma Public. And you did."

Bunny grinned.

"Yes, and no," he said, and his eyes grew a trifle misty. "At first I played for my public, and then the cops chased my public away. I stood there looking at empty seats and the thought occurred to me that maybe Dad was in one of those seats and I wondered how he would feel if I failed to live up to the basketball name of Bronson. And that gave me the something to fight for, Coach, that you talked about one day. It's not an Alma Public, and it's not an Alma Mater. Maybe you would call it an Alma Pater."

And when Jap Marsden heard about it, he resigned himself to more lean years for he knew that, with all his trickery, he could not bar the doors, or place a quarantine, against the spirit of the great Rabbit Bronson.



The Court Parade of '38!

By NAT HOLMAN

Basketball Coach C. C. N. Y.

Thunder? No! That's the furious fives of '38 galloping to the nets! 100,000 teams are whipping into play—and Nat Holman, star-maker, looks 'em over and checks his 1-2-3 choices for National and Conference crowns.

IT won't be long now! The nights are long and the weather cold. King Football has gasped out his last few breaths and given up the ghost. "The king is dead! Long live the king!" And lo! His Imperial

Highness, Basketball, Emperor of Indoor Athletics, ascends the throne for his annual winter reign. In every hamlet, village, town and city, boys, girls, men and women are eagerly preparing for the annual winter whirlwind. More than one hundred thousand teams—more than any other sport can muster—will whip into action. Elementary schools, high schools, prep schools, junior colleges, colleges, universities, industrial teams, clubs, Y.M.C.A.s, Y.M.H.A.s, and Boy Scout troops throughout the country are dashing and dribbling in preparation for what should be the greatest season in basketball's history.

To quote Grantland Rice, "Basketball has become the main winter game of the nation, East, West, North and South—with nothing else even close—it has covered every section of the United States." And why not? The thrill of long set-shots swishing through the nets, the magical ball-handling, the exciting speed of players dashing from one basket to the other, bodies leaping high into the air, keen strategy and shrewd maneuvers are all in plain view for the spectator to see and appreciate. More people play this game than any other, even though it is but forty years old. And can you blame them? You don't need a lot of expensive equipment. Just a pair of sneakers, the ball, some hoops nailed

Nat Holman, dynamic coach of C. C. N. Y. basketball, for two decades has played and planned to make the modern court game a major world sport. Starting in Newark, he ranged east to Bridgeport and west to Chicago. He hooped it up with the famous Original Celtics, who in ten years never lost a series. Since 1931 he has given all his time and wizardry to the crack teams of City College.

to a backboard and you're set to play one of the healthiest, most exciting games that keen-eyed, hard-plunging sportsmen ever invented.

And while you've been out risking pneumonia to watch your fa-

vorite eleven cover itself with mud and glory, the boys have been practicing their dribbling, dodging, shooting baskets, guarding, learning the latest wrinkles in offense and defense from coaches who must be on their toes to keep up with their continually advancing competitors. And I've been checking up on developments in the various sections of the country so that you will know what to expect as the season gets under way.

But before I go out on a limb and predict which should be the best teams in the country and why, first, let me show you to what an amazing extent basketball has grown in the past forty-odd years. The past season saw a total of *eighty million* paid admissions, almost as much as baseball and football combined.

Throughout the country, auditoriums, arenas, gymnasiums and field-houses have been reporting record-breaking attendances. One hundred and fifty thousand of the most blasé population in the nation watched basketball in Madison Square Garden alone last year. So much for spectator interest.

As for participants, basketball is played in twenty-two countries throughout the world by approximately twenty million players, and has been included in the Olympic program. In the United States, we have annual championships and inter-sectional games which bring together teams

whose campuses are three thousand miles apart, a practice which is no longer a novelty.

Basketball receives intense attention from the movies, newspapers and radio. Therefore, there can be little doubt that the game is the greatest in the world if measured by any of the standards of size of attendance, number of players or amount of interest as shown in periodicals.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

But such matters are common knowledge and can be passed over with mere mention. However, there are several developments which I believe should be brought to your attention.

Most important is that Madison Square Garden has become the Rose Bowl of basketball. Motivated by the desire to bring the best in basketball to its patrons, Ned Irish, the director, has taken pains to invite only the finest teams in the nation to his arena. Realizing this, quintets throughout the length and breadth of these United States are playing the best brand of basketball they can in order to get the coveted invitation which means a luxurious trip to New York, not only with expenses paid, but with a neat profit to take home.

There has also been proposed a national intercollegiate championship tournament, and a committee with regional chairmen has been set up. The tourney will be held in the Municipal Auditorium in Kansas City, Missouri. How successful this initial competition will be remains to be seen. But there is little doubt that if the tournament is handled well, the national collegiate championships should, in time, develop into something akin to the World Series. However, we'll know more about this matter next year.

THERE has been only one important rule change this season, namely, the elimination of the center jump after a basket has been scored. This is a continuation of the tendency which first expressed itself in the abolition of the center jump after a foul try has been successfully completed. The new rule, which limits the center jump to the beginning of each half and held balls, was an attempt on the part

of the governing body to give the small man a "break." Hitherto, teams carried a human telephone pole as a center to gain possession of the ball for them. Now that, after a basket has been made, the ball will be given to the team scored against, the bean-pole loses much of his value and will probably be replaced by a somewhat smaller, faster man who can take an active part in the team's offense. Thus the squads with comparatively small centers will have at least an even chance to maintain possession of the ball, which is rather important, because, after all, you can't score while the opposition has the ball.

For several years now, teams on the West Coast have been playing without the tip-off and it has been shown in actual competition that due to the fact that no time is lost in putting the ball in play as formerly, the game is a much faster one and produces higher scoring contests. As much as six minutes of actual playing time is added to the contest. According to actual tests.

Another reason for the change was to eliminate the roughness incidental to the tip-off as the players attempted to gain possession of the flying sphere. In this way much fouling has been eliminated, which, again, is a factor in making the new game a speedier one. The results of the new change will, therefore, serve to make the game a more interesting one for the spectator. Play will now surge from one end of the court to the other without cessation. No longer will a team be able to monopolize possession of the ball because of its height. And a good, fast, small team will thus have an even chance to cut the opposition down to its size—for now it gets the ball at least half of the time.

One further effect which the elimination of the tip-off will have is that the squads will now be numerically larger. Previously, due to the relaxation periods which occurred after the shooting of a basket, five men could play the entire game. Now, with the very essential rest eliminated, coaches will have to use more men to keep the game going at high speed. Thus, in a sense, basketball will no longer be a battle between two five-man teams, but rather a contest between much larger squads. An important point to consider is that coaches who are not plentifully supplied with first-

grade material may be forced to employ the zone-defense, because it is less wearing, physically, on the players and thus less replacements need be made.

However, a zone defense nullifies "cutting" and causes the offense to rely on deft ball handling and set shooting. Accordingly, the spectators may lose one of the greatest thrills in the game—a sudden dash for the basket, a bullet-like pass, and a basket scored from close-up. Sentiment against the zone defense is increasing for this very reason. Coaches, players, and spectators would not like to see games degenerate into set-shooting contests. But they are continually being forced to adopt the zone, since the rules give that type of defense an advantage. I myself, strongly opposed to the zone in principle because it nullifies speed afoot and shrewd screening tactics, am therefore forced to use it. The zone defense permits a slow man to play because he can "get by" on the attack if he is a smooth ball handler, and on the defense he does not have to move too rapidly. It is fairly obvious that when you can use a slower man, the game must be slowing down. Thus, one of the chief charms of basketball—its speed and fire—may be partly diminished.

I believe that in the East, sentiment against the zone will increase with particular vehemence in the next season or so. Such a reaction would be based on the fact that the East has just adopted the interpretation of the "screening" rule which has been used throughout most of the nation, namely, that a player is entitled to his position on the floor. This principle permits much more body contact than Easterners have been accustomed to. Also, it facilitates matters for the offensive team to get a man clear for an unobstructed "cut" for the basket in a man-for-man defense, since the guard can now be "screened" off from the man he is guarding. In an effort to counteract this many Eastern teams will adopt the zone defense because in such a defense, there is no need to "switch" after a "screen" has been set up.

I am convinced that a clamor against the zone will arise when it becomes perfectly clear that such a defense essentially makes of basketball a set-shooting contest, which cannot possibly have the wide spectator or

player appeal that the present game has. In support of this contention, I should like to add that the American Professional League, which is primarily interested in pleasing the spectator, has long prohibited the use of this defense. However, since the business of coaches is to produce winning teams, we are forced to use it. I, for one, however, will be glad when the nation at large is awakened to the menace which the zone defense presents, and the rules amended so as to make the *man-for-man, the only defense permissible*.

One other slight alteration in the governing code has been made. "Face-guarding," from now on, is not a foul unless there is physical contact. This change will have but little effect on general basketball strategy, but it is hoped that many irritating incidents will be avoided.

FIRE-HORSE PLAY

WITH the growth of intersectional contests, provincialism in basketball has been to a large extent eliminated with the result that no style or "system" of play is peculiar to anyone section of the country. Now that the "screening" schism has been bridged, I believe that the East will adopt the pivot attack at the side of the foul area to a much greater extent than formerly. But in general, the top-notch teams in each section play the same type of basketball, with a general tendency toward the abandonment of set-plays which also permit the defense to get set.

Some coaches prefer to outscore the other fellow, and let the defense take care of itself. Others first build up a good defense and then work on their attack. This is true in all sports, and is a matter of individual conviction rather than one of sectional bias. It is true that in the East, the defense has in the past been stressed more than in other parts of the country. But now that they, too, have adopted the "screening" interpretation used in most parts of the United States, the East is also going in for long passes and fast breaks originating from a zone defense.

There is one style of play, however, which has achieved a measure of success, but which is not yet employed on a large scale. I refer to the so-called "fire-horse" style of play in which the defense attempts

to cover the entire playing area, rather than merely the defensive half of the court. Such a defense seems to be effective with tall, fast players. However, whether it will stand up against fast, adept ball-handling remains to be seen. It is certain, however, that "fire-horse" basketball leads to much scoring, greatly increases the need for stamina on the part of the players, since they must chase their adversaries all over the playing area, and needs plenty of reserves to keep the defense from falling apart of sheer fatigue.

TWO ARE TOPS!

WITH teams and coaches in every section of the country striving for victory, and with no section being able to maintain any clear-cut dominance, the chances of any one team completing a schedule of from fifteen to twenty-five games without defeat are rather slight. Accordingly, I am not going to predict that any team will go through the season undefeated, for it is almost impossible for a squad to maintain its highest caliber of performance throughout the long season. And in addition, a team is fairly certain of meeting opposition which is "hot" on a particular night when it is itself not quite up to snuff. Injuries, ineligibilities, failure of key-men to return to school, unpredictable sophomores, etc.,—all in the hands of uncertain Fate,—make this forecast of mine something less sacred than gospel. Nevertheless, here goes!

With grace, rather than the solemnity which should accompany such action, I shall now name the team which I believe will be acclaimed the best in the nation next March.—Gentlemen, I give you *Stanford University*!

On the basis of their past performances and the fact that only two of the grinning Indians will be missing this winter, I think that they will be the standout team of the country once again. Led by Hank Luisetti, the sensational forward who has been breaking scoring records with zest and frequency ever since he came to Stanford, the Cardinals still have Art Stoeffen, Jack Calderwood, the Zonne boys and a host of others from exceptional reserve material and freshman squads. This array, plus Dinty Moore and Howie Turner, who were

graduated, gave Stanford successive Southern Division and Coast Championships in the past two years, besides trouncing all extra Conference rivals, and incidentally breaking all sorts of scoring records en route.

The squad is tall, well conditioned, lightning fast on attack and defense, accurate to a phenomenal degree in its shooting, deft in its ball handling and has an excellent competitive spirit. In John Bunn, they have a coach who ranks with the finest basketball mentors in the nation. He has provided them with a soundly conceived attack and defense which takes every possible advantage of the players' potentialities.

Incidentally, the amazingly accurate one-handed push shot affected by the Indians has so impressed coaches who have seen Stanford play that we may expect more frequent use of it throughout the country. The Indians use a man-for-man and also a zone defense, in each case using their height to great advantage. On the attack they employ the fast break, set-screen plays, and are particularly strong in controlling rebounds from both backboards. What more do you want?

Just a shade behind the Indians, if not on a par with them, I place George Keogan's *Notre Dame* squad. The Irish fashioned an impressive record for themselves last season, and are all set to better it this year. The South Bend squad has lost only DeMots and Allan, reserves the past campaign, and has veterans in all the starting and reserve posts. Johnny Moir and Paul Nowak, last year's sensations, are back and in finer form than ever. Meyer, Brown and Wukavits will round out the starting five.

Notre Dame plays an aggressive game, especially around the backboards, where they take full advantage of their height, weight, and speed. The Irish are second to none in the daring and spirited style of of their play. Keogan has given them a resourceful, varied attack and defense which revolves about Nowak and Moir. I believe that both *Notre Dame* and *Stanford* will have outstanding records, with the Indians slightly more brilliant. It is extremely unfortunate that two such fine teams have not been scheduled to meet.

From here on, the role of the prophet

grows more difficult, and since few other teams make transcontinental jaunts, I will eschew the job of nation-wide ranking and give you something far more tangible—how the teams will shape up in their own conferences. I will add some remarks on the comparative strengths of the various leagues, so that you can form a national ranking list if you want to. Since most teams do not wander far from their home pastures, such a list, however, is not particularly significant.

NEW YORK CITY TEAMS

LET'S take the New York City area first. Not that it's the best—for it certainly didn't shine overly much in intersectional competition last season—but because the teams of the nation's metropolis will meet the finest representatives of all sections of the country and thus give us the best standard of evaluation of national strength.

The general impression is that New York will be represented by some of the finest quintets it has had in some time. *Long Island University*, *Fordham*, *New York University* and *City College* are all expecting banner seasons. *Manhattan*, *Brooklyn*, and *St. John* are either destitute of veterans, or have not enough all-around strength to be potent court powers this year.

Long Island University shared the metropolitan championship with *Fordham* last season and was generally regarded as one of the finest teams in the East. The Blackbirds have lost four outstanding players, but the replacements from the freshman squad are nothing short of sensational. Hillhouse, Torgoff and Sewitch are the veterans remaining, but they'll have to fight some to keep King, Kaplowitz, Newman and Bromberg from starting posts. Any combination of these players has an average height of over 6 feet 2 inches. Torgoff is one of the shrewdest players in the East, and the ex-freshmen are all dead-eyes. The squad which will be this year's *L.I.U.* varsity went to Denver for the *A.A.U.* championships last season and reached the quarter-final round where they were eliminated by the *Denver Safeways*, the team which eventually won the national championship. The Black-

birds lost to *Stanford* last season and will be out for gore when they meet the Indians in the Garden this year.

New York University expects to be on the heights again after a mediocre season. The Violets will be represented by a team which was outstanding as a freshmen quintet three years ago. Carnevale, Tarrow, Boardman, and Witty are the seniors who are expected to start, and Lewis, a brilliant sophomore, should be able to break into the starting five.

City College will have a veteran outfit, which started out like a rocket and fizzled as the season waned. The Beavers are still a slick, ball-handling outfit, and with the non-jump rule and added experience in their favor, should compile an impressive record. Fliegel, Katz, Goldstein, Cohen, Jarmulnick, Lefkowitz, and Soudpious will see action most frequently. *City* meets *Stanford* in the Garden two nights before *L.I.U.* does and the players are rather optimistic over the outcome. I would like to see a little more of both teams before changing my opinion as to which is the best in the country.

Fordham, surprise co-winner of the Metropolitan Championship, will have Davis, Daley and Hasmler back. These men play a deliberate game which makes their great speed all the more effective when they use it. However, I think the Rams will miss Drury, the hub of their attack and defense, and will not be able to repeat their success.

St. Johns has a junior team with the exception of Bush, its senior star. I do not believe that they will better their record by much as they are still too inexperienced. *Manhattan* lost all of its regulars but Volpe and Cole. Their reserves and sophomores are not too impressive and I think that Coach Neil Cohalan will spend this year rebuilding for the next campaign. *Brooklyn* and *St. Francis* just haven't the material to do more than make it close for the Big Six.

THE EAST

BRIEF survey of the Eastern Intercollegiate League indicates a close fight between *Pennsylvania*, the defending champion and *Columbia*. *Yale*, *Harvard* and *Dartmouth* should be close but I like

Columbia's chances best. Wolff, O'Brien, Anderson and Macioce are all back and they were good enough to tie for third last season. *Pennsylvania* will be led by Menzel and he should receive enough support from a squad well supplied by veterans to keep the team near the top. At *Yale* and *Harvard*, Ken Loeffler and Wes Fessler respectively are gradually getting their players accustomed to their styles of play. Both are dark horses and may come through in what should be an exciting race. As usual, the caliber of play in the Ivy League will be high in spirit and short in finesse because each school's rivalry with the others is an ancient one.

In the Eastern Intercollegiate Conference, it looks as though *Pittsburg*, titleholder, *Temple*, which was defeated in a play-off for the championship, and *Georgetown*, which finished fifth last year, will be at it neck and neck. *Pitt* has plenty of reserve strength, losing only one or two men, and *Temple*, led by Mike Bloom, has lost only Jeunger. But the Hoyas will have the sensational Murphey back, and he'll be supported by six veterans including Petroskey, Bilbeau and Nolan. Only Bassin has been lost and Coach Mesmer's boys have a good chance to end up on top. Other powerful teams in this section of the country include *Duquesne* and *St. Joseph*.

THE SOUTH

TRAVELING to the Southeastern Conference we find that playing strength was better distributed there last season than has been the case in the past. I doubt that *Georgia Tech* will retain the title it won last year, despite the fact that it has three regulars returning and is plentifully supplied with reserves. *Kentucky*, which loses Donahue and Carlisle, has Hodge, Hagin, Curtis, Walker, Thompson and Opper returning, and should go places. Of these, only Hagin and Walker are seniors, and the additional experience of last year's sophomores should count heavily.

Tennessee is also plentifully supplied with talented material and should be near the top in the final standings. The Vols, who lost only to *Kentucky* in last year's Conference battle, lost Marshall and Johnson. But Rice, Putnam, Westercamp, Logan and Fisher will all be back. *Louisiana*

and *State*, *Tulane*, *Vanderbilt* and *Georgia* should also improve their standings. The Green Wave has Pare, Harmon, Cotlar and Neyland returning, while the Commodores, the Tigers and the Bulldogs will rely on veterans to revive their prestige.

THE WEST

MOVING up to the Western Intercollegiate Conference, or Big Ten as it is usually called, we find the expectation of the closest race in years.

Illinois, which tied *Minnesota* for the championship last year, will have to replace Combes, Henry and Reigels if Boudreau and Nisbet are to be on another championship team, and I doubt if Coach Mills has the material. *Minnesota* is in better shape for the coming season, losing only Seebach. Dave McMillan will bring his boys to the Garden this year and his team should be an excellent representative of the fine style of play in this conference. Kundla, Addington, Rolek and Manley will all be back to form the nucleus of a good defensive team which relies on smart ball handling on the attack.

Purdue should be close to the top this year with a fine veteran team returning. Seward and Downey will be gone, but Young, Sines, Anderson and a host of others are back to give Coach Lambert another successful season. As usual, the Boilermakers will feature the fast break which they use with dazzling speed. In addition, Sines, Anderson and Young, the Conference's high scorer, are all excellent shots when the opposition is playing back for the fast break. *Ohio* has MacDonald, Baudebaugh, Hull and Baker returning and should be an important factor in the race, although Dye and Thomas will undoubtedly be missed.

Michigan should be near the top next March. The Wolverines have been improving gradually and employ a slow break offense and depend on size and exceptional ability to control the rebounds off the backboards rather than on speed. Thomas and Townsend, amongst the tallest men in the Big Ten, will lead a veteran squad. *Indiana*, which is still rebuilding, and *Northwestern*, which closed strongly at the end of the race, are both dark horses. *Wisconsin*, *Chicago* and *Iowa* are expected to

remain in the second division. Summarizing, I'd say that the title will be decided among *Minnesota*, *Purdue*, *Michigan* and *Indiana*, with *Ohio State*, *Illinois* and *Northwestern* close behind.

THE MIDLANDS

SKIPPING over to the Big Six, we find co-champion *Kansas* trying to carry on after having lost five men—all of them stars—and will have a difficult time this year to continue its perennial supremacy in the conference. *Iowa State*, after two years near the cellar, should be close to the top this season, having a veteran array. In general, all schools in the Big Six are either well supplied with veterans or had strong freshman teams last year. Therefore, a dogfight is expected with *Nebraska* and *Iowa State* near the head of the list.

THE SOUTHWEST

TAKING a flying trip over to the Southwest Conference, we find that *Southern Methodist*, *Arkansas* and *Texas* shape up as the class of that section of the country. *Southern Methodist University*, which took top honors last year, should be given the edge, having lost only Blanton. With Dewell, Norton, Sprague and Acker returning, and with reinforcements from a strong freshman squad, the Mustangs should be able to hold off the perennially dangerous *Arkansas* quintet which is also well stocked with veterans.

Texas, which is slated to get three brilliant newcomers from the *John Tarleton Junior College* championship team, still has a chance to cop the honors.

THE ROCKIES

FOLLOWING the Rockies northward, we come to one of the least recognized but finest playing leagues in the nation—the Rocky Mountain Conference. This year it will be split into the Big Seven and the Little Five.

Colorado University with Schwartz, White, and Sidwell returning is expected to take honors in the Big Seven, with *Utah University*, which has Mulica, Pendleton, and Ahlquist coming back, close

behind. *Wyoming*, which will rely on Hicks, Winterholler, and Young, will probably be a potent factor in deciding the championship.

In the Little Five, *Montana State*, which finished on top in the Western Division and then won the Conference championship in the play-offs last year, again is expected to triumph. The Grizzlies will be led by Exum and Ogle, both of whom made the All-Conference team last season. Greely, with Hallinan and Cromer back, should give *Montana* a battle all the way.

THE COAST

JUMPING over the Rockies, which is not a bad trick if you go in for that sort of stuff, we arrive at the West Coast, right where we started. As I stated previously, I believe that *Stanford* will again come through for the Conference crown. In the Northern Division, *Washington State*, with a veteran squad, and *Oregon*, a veteran group led by Silver, 6 foot 8-inch center, should fight it out for the right to meet the winner of the Southern Division. In the Southern part of the Conference, there should be a dogfight among *Southern California*, *California* and *U.C.L.A.*—for second place. Of course, anything can happen, but that's the way it looks now.

This is one of the toughest leagues in the nation, and even though *Stanford* seems a standout at this time, the rest of the group is too well coached to let any one team run away with it. This was evidenced by the way *Stanford*, which steam-rollered all outside opposition last year, dropped a game each to Sam Barry's *University of Southern California* squad and to Nibs Price's *California* quintet and barely squeezed through against *Washington State* for the coast championship.

In this survey, I've left out a number of outstanding teams and conferences—not because they weren't of importance, but rather because of the limitations of space.

Well, there it is—the Big Forecast of 1938. Don't bet your last red cent on these predictions—men are mortal—even hoop critics with long white beards. One fact is as sure as the referee's whistle—1938 will be a prime season for the nation's basket-bombardiers!

The Basket Busters

By HAROLD M. SHERMAN

YOU should have been on the coast-to-coast barnstormin' trip that the All-American Ramblers took in quest of the national professional basketball title a few years back. Believe me, brother, that was a trip as wearin' on men's nerves as it was on rubber soled shoes!

No, I didn't play myself. All I did was to manage the team and see that it was dated up ahead like a circus and take up all the money that was offered on the home hopes and keep the boys feelin' sociable toward one another. If any of you birds think I had it soft, you can put me in charge of a beehive and give each bee a separate grudge against me and I'll come up smilin' if I don't look natural.

To make matters as bad as they could be without bein' worse, I was the guy who originated the bright idee of takin' a basketball team on a cross-country hike. This made me about as popular with the bunch, after what happened, as a Republican sittin' in on the Democratic convention.

You see, it was me that organized the first, round-the-world baseball club and I picked up so much dough with this outfit I didn't see why the same couldn't be did in basketball. Well, I can see now with both eyes shut. A baseball diamond's a baseball diamond but a basketball floor ain't always a basketball floor. For instance, one night we might be forced to play in a dance hall with the floor waxed so slick that the boys needed bumpers on the place they usually sat on, and the next night we'd be trottin' onto a concrete floor so hard you could smell burnt rubber when the game started and if any of the boys took a tumble it was generally good for a bottle of arnica. Of course the home team was all prepared to meet these local conditions which gave them the tip-off at the very start even though most of 'em did play like a bunch of hams.

As far as the team was concerned, if you could have found seven better basketball players in the United States this side of Canada at that time, I'd have bought you the best clam dinner in the state of indigestion. Everyone of them boys was born

Don't stare at my gray hairs, Brother, I came by 'em honest. Yeah, I managed the Ramblers. Classiest troupe of cassaba-tossers in the world. What wrecked 'em?—Brother, why spoil my day!

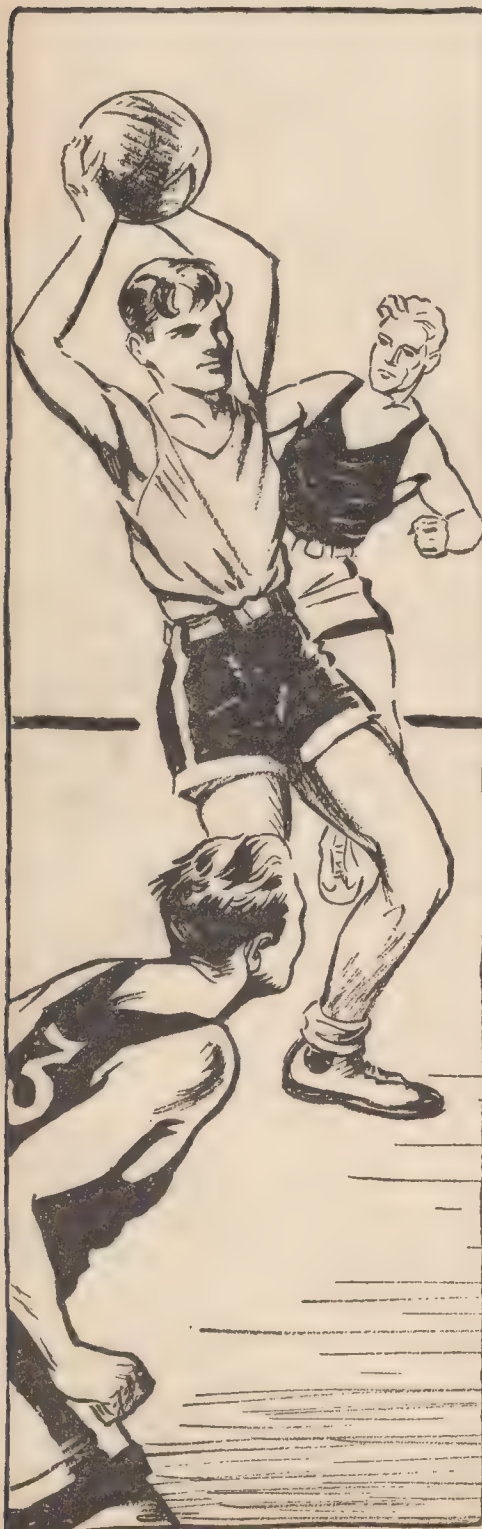
A Complete Novel of Barnstorming Basketeers

with basketball eyes. The eyes had rings around 'em. They were hand-picked specimens of physical prowess and with the exception of one player I wouldn't have split one of the white hairs I grew on that trip between any of 'em.

But Loop Harris, to my mind, was the world's champion rifleman of basketball sharp-shootin'. He could hit that old iron ring from any place on the floor and about any time he got his hands on the ball. He wasn't nothin' to look at and about all you saw at first glance was elbows and knees. Then gradually you could tell that he was squint-eyed and that one side of his jaw was longer than the other like he'd laid his face between the jaws of a vise. Loop had sandy hair and a disposition as sultry as 120 degrees in the shade with no breeze blowin'. When it came to pitchin' free throws from the foul line he would cock his head to one side, stick his elbows in under his knees, bend down till his knees came up even with his chin and all you ever saw was the net wave . . . so clean did he cut the rim. Loop was our ace in the hole and the big point scorer in every game we played. It didn't make no difference what defense the opposition put up—they couldn't stop him. We used to advertise ahead of the game, invitin' the home folks to "See Loop loop 'em!" And he always came through, sometimes with the entire team standin' over him like a detachment of the National Guard.

We was on our way through Kentucky, leavin' a trail of dead and wounded bones behind us, when I gets the special delivery challenge that was to mark a turnin' point in my illustrated career—not to mention the travelin' troupe with me.

The letter bore a postage stamp licked by the manager of the Northern Stars, a team which had been writin' its name on the heavens up in northern Michigan. The name of the town where this outfit boarded and roomed was Tough Mountain, but I told the boys it looked like easy climbin' to



me. We was booked for two games in Michigan, one with the Detroit Rails and the other with the Grand Rapids Furniture Quintet and why not hit the dog trail for the arctic part of Michigan when there was one thousand berries in it for us and perhaps a lot more on lumberjack side bets?

"You'll find we pack a neat little wallop," the challenge went on to state in Grade-A grammar, "and the town's behind us 101 per cent. We know we're situated in an out-of-the-way place and that's why we're offering you a thousand-dollar guarantee. It's worth that much to beat you. Please sign the enclosed contract and oblige. Yours, Pat Sullivan, Mgr. the Northern Stars—'The Team That's Never Tasted Defeat.'"

"Whew! They loves themselves, don't they?" says Loop Harris, when he hears the letter. "If there's one thing this here John Doe likes to do it's Waterlooing home hopes. There's one place where I'll have to trot out my sample case of baskets and decorate the hall."

This letter never affected us none. We was used to such bunk. The louder they crowed the harder they fell—with us. And it was the little "who-are-you" teams that was always makin' the most noise.

I signed the contract and shipped it back to Tough Mountain, markin' the date in my date book and then forgettin' all about the game until we was ready to shove off from Grand Rapids after breakin' the Furniture Quintet up into kindling wood.

IT was the heavy underwear time of year—the latter part of January with the thermometer reading 20 degrees below zero. None of the boys was complainin' about the heat except Loop who said it wasn't warm enough in his hotel room. The snow was four feet deep on the level and the weather bureau giving out lots of encouragement about another blizzard overdue . . . and us at the depot startin' out to meet it.

"This basketball tour is gettin' pleasanter and pleasanter," says Eddie Jordan, big-nosed back guard, who was nursin' a grouch from bein' scored on by accident for the first time in ten games. "Why didn't you go south in the winter and north in summer?"

"Because basketball ain't a hot weather

game," I answers, rather short, studying my time-table and tryin' to figure out where on the map of Michigan this Tough Mountain is.

"Well, you ain't exactly seen the Eskimos play it, has you?" Eddie asks me, while the other boys applaud.

"You wait till you play the Northern Stars," says I, finally locatin' Tough Mountain with my finger. "We're goin' so far into northern Michigan you'll think you're in Iceland. It'll take us two days to get there, connectin' with every train that connects . . . barrin' snowstorms and glaciers. We're booked to play tomorrow night and if we have good luck we ought to get there in time to dress on the floor."

From the groans that went up I could tell that the boys was getting mighty sick of bouncin' around over jerk-water railroads and sleepin' sittin' up for lack of Pullmans. We'd been out five weeks and was lookin' back on an unbroken string of victories. We had the goods all right and we sure had distributed 'em along the way. But it was a wonder we wasn't carryin' a team of broken legs, wrists, elbows, noses and other protrudin' or obtrusive parts of the human anatomy. All the boys was pretty much stuck up with court plaster and adhesive tape but they was sputtering along on all cylinders. And I intended to keep 'em there until the tour was over and then go into some quiet business like a stationery salesman and never take another trip as long as I lived.

In baseball about the worst that could happen was for the pitcher's arm to go sore or a player to get a charley horse or for some bird to get beaned. Anything else seldom happened. But in basketball you was worryin' all the time for fear the china dolls with pink knees would turn an ankle or do a high dive or bump heads. There was a thousand things that might happen and with money up on the game every second of play was hard on the pulse.

Well, the boys couldn't do anything but crawl on the train since I didn't have tickets for any summer resort and the next thing we know we're plowing through the snow flurries. The tickets was about a yard long with four pretty perforated sections and the first one labeled Walton Junction.

"What's the mileage menu subdivided

for?" Loop asks me, curious like. "So's the conductor can go on a tear?"

I didn't think his question was worth answerin' since he'd find out soon enough. There wasn't enough passengers on the train to attend an afternoon tea. The windows was frosted over but no one wanted to see where we was goin' just so we kept on goin' there.

THERE was a forty-mile gale blowin' by five o'clock in the afternoon when the G. R. & I. train skated into Walton Junction wheezing snow and hangin' icicles.

"All out for Walton Junk-shun . . . an' all points north!" hollers the conductor as he puts on his fur overcoat and gets ready to corral his train in the round-house.

The boys tumble out in the aisle like a flock of mountain sheep and slide off the rear platform into two feet of new-laid snow. They take in the frozen landscape with open mouths and brace themselves against the wind.

"Sufferin' codfish!" says Loop. "This looks like Peary's last stop before his dash to the pole!"

All there was in sight was two frame buildin's, a grocery store and what, for want of Webster's providin' us with an appropriate name, must be classified as a hotel. It was a frame front with a veranda stickin' out like a sore tooth . . . one of them places where you couldn't buy a clean towel; where they served you ice water in a cracked pitcher for shavin'; where the landlord and family lived and where a hand-painted sign hung in the combination parlor and lobby sayin': "Home Sweet Home. We Want You to Feel the Same Way," or somethin' to that effect.

But Webster's hotel was twice as good as nothin' and we troops in, stampin' snow all over the floor and makin' a fuss generally so as to let 'em know we was strangers. We really didn't need to make so much noise because a cowbell tinkles just over the door as she opens.

"Ain't that cute?" chortles Eddie Jordan, openin' and shuttin' the door several times.

"Cut out that stockyard stuff!" crabs Loop, ugly as a Mexican bull fighter, "and

shut that door before we gets buried in a snowdrift!"

Just as we was gettin' ready to toss the ball up between the two of 'em and let 'em fight it out, there is the heavy squeak of shoes and in pops the landlord, big as life—which in his case was about two hundred and forty pounds minus a big bowl pipe. His head was bald except for a wavy fringe around the edge. It looked hard and cold like a skating rink but the ice thawed a little when he smiled.

"Hello, boys! Sign here," he says, diggin' a greasy book from under the counter and jabbin' a broken-pointed pen toward me.

"We don't intend to stay, thank you," speaks up Loop, informal like. "We just come in to get out of the storm and to wait between trains."

The landlord gives Loop the once over like he'd committed a foul.

"Goin' north or south?" he asks.

"Ain't there any east or west?" babbles Loop like he was disappointed not to have a wider choice.

"Not in this country," snaps the landlord, 'losin' his smile. "If you're goin' north the next train's due at four in the morning. But if she's here inside of two hours after she's due I'll give you your lodgin' free."

Loop turns to the team, glummer than glum.

"Believe me, boys, we're up against an air-tight defense," he says. "No chance to break through. 'Bout the only thing we can do is stall for time."

Well, we scribbles our John Henrys on the book, the landlord not lettin' me sign for the bunch. Then we spreads out around the room to wait until the landlord's wife finds parkin' space for us all. I steps over to the dirty bay window that has a long box of wilted ferns settin' on the sill . . . and peeks out at where the railroad track ought to be if it wasn't for the snow. The blizzard is blizzarding. By mornin' it looks like we wouldn't be able to get across to the grocery store, which means slow death by starvation. Eddie Jordan sidles up alongside me and sniffs at the ferns. "Wouldn't this make a swell reception room for an undertaker?" he asks. But I can't give him no answer except a mournful look.

THE landlord comes downstairs with a load of water pitchers and stops to be sociable. We was the only clients and I guess maybe he didn't know he had us like flies on sticky fly paper! We swaps scowls for grins at the start but pretty soon the landlord shoots the ball at us straight.

"I see you're a basketball team," says he, leavin' room for argument.

"Collectively and individually," says I, leavin' no room for doubt.

The landlord sets the water pitchers down on the counter and lamps us all over like he was judge at a stock show. Then he shakes his head, sad and sober.

"Boys, you don't know what you're a-comin' to," he says.

"No—but we knows what we've arrived at," loops Loop, sarcastically.

I speaks up right away in a reprimandin' tone.

"Wait a minute, Loop. Maybe this here . . . ah . . . Mr. Webster . . . has some dope on the boys we're booked to play."

"How'd you know my name was Webster?" speaks up the landlord, surprised like.

"Why . . . er . . . well . . . by consultin' the dictionary," I answers, vague enough to keep him wonderin'. I don't usually guess 'em as straight as that.

"By the time you've got through with the Northern Stars you'll be consultin' a encyclopedia," advises Mr. Webster, while the boys give one another the wink.

"What's so strange about the Northern Stars?" asks Eddie Jordan. "Ain't they human?"

"Not when they's playin' basketball," chirps our landlord. "They's like Michigan wildcats!"

"They must be pretty good," agrees Loop, dubiously. "I ain't never heard of 'em."

"No, they ain't given to talkin' much—and they ain't gone out beyond their own precinct before. But there ain't five men anywhere what can beat them on their own floor."

Here's where the landlord begins to get unpopular.

"If so, why so?" queries Loop, followin' up.

But the landlord takes on a wise air and starts to pick up his water pitchers.

"That's for you boys to find out," he answers, short and sweet.

"Can't you tell us one thing," persists Loop. "How come you know so much about these terrible terrors?"

Mr. Webster turns his whole front our way.

"You don't think I could make a livin' out of this place alone, do you?" he throws at us. "I'm one of the team backers!"

We couldn't have been more taken off our feet than if Santa Claus had suddenly busted in the door. The landlord a basketball nut? Putting up good dough on the games . . . and makin' money at it? Sufferin' free throws!

The boys all reaches for their pocket-books at the same time, showin' how much confidence they has in themselves. But the landlord waves them to the sidelines with a water pitcher.

"Nothin' stirrin', boys. I places my money through the Tough Mountain Syndicate. If you want any of it you'll have to put up your coin there."

Highly civilized, I'd call that. It give me the first tremors I'd ever had. Things begun to look nigh unto rotten in Denmark . . . but I didn't say anythin'.

"What do you know about basketball, anyhow?" asks Eddie, as the landlord starts toward the kitchen.

"I don't know nothin' about the game," he answers, honest like, "but you can't trip me up on any of the business angles."

"Meanin' what?" I asks, curious.

"Winner's end guarantee," he lets slide as he fades out of the picture.

Right then is when the All-American Rambler basketball team and their business manager holds a conference. From what the landlord has said, without makin' no bones about it, we was cut and dried for the nicest and boldest little frame-up of our ballsome careers.

III

WE'D played for money, placin' bets on ourselves—but we'd played square, bein' satisfied with an even break.

Of course, we'd met up with raw deals and been gypped here and there but we'd come through so far with the clothes on our backs and our bill folds well lined. We'd been content to let the other fellows

worry about us and we didn't give a razzberry for the imposin' records of the oposin' teams. We just went out and did our stuff, unconcerned like, and the opposition usually cracked.

But now we was all-fired interested in gettin' the advance dope on the Northern Stars, not wantin' to get froze out if we could help it.

"What sort of a surprise package do you reckon them Northern Stars has got for us?" asks Eddie, while the rest of the boys comes in on the chorus.

"It's beyond my mental capacity," says I, "but you can bet a couple of half-soled snow shoes that I'm goin' to be on my guard when we hits Tough Mountain. And the first sneakin' suspicion I gets of any crooked business. . . . I calls the game off."

"Atta boy, M.G.R.," sings Loop, afore-said bein' my nickname for manager. "I ain't hankerin' to have to leave this climate on a dog sled."

"Evidently them northern pussy cats is nursin' the idee that they is slick ones," I guesses, "and they figures on makin' a cleanin' at our expense. Now if we minds our P's and Q's and W's. . . . I got a hunch we stands to rake in some cold coin."

"Cold is right!" agrees Eddie, shiverin' as the wind howls against the window.

Just then Mrs. Webster comes in. She is a long-drawn-out lady with a nose startin' high on her forehead and runnin' down so's it leans over her mouth like an overhingin' cliff. She gives us a bow and when she opens her mouth to talk the sounds come out her nose like the loud speaker on a radio.

"Follow me, gentlemen," she pipes, startin' up the stairs.

"Not any farther'n I can help," sniffs Jim Codfry, the sheik of our crowd. But we single-files it up the steps, trippin' over the holes in the carpet . . . until we finds ourselves in a dark hall, feelin' about like we was "it" in blindman's bluff.

"I can only accommodate seven of you boys," informs the landlord's other half. "I've only got three double beds and a cot . . . but I can sleep the number eight with some blankets on the floor."

This sounds so encouragin' that I speaks right up.

"Number eight is me, lady. I never

sleeps in any strange beds unless I have to."

The boys sets up a howl but I silence them with, "You birds have to play and I don't. If there's any layin' on pine knots to be did, I'm the one what's elected to do it!"

Mrs. Webster rattles the door knobs and distributes the eight of us in three rooms that is luxuriously outfitted with second-hand furniture. None of the bedsteads matches the dressers and the wall paper yells bloody murder but we ain't goin' to take up no permanent residence in the place so we tries to imagine we is put up at the Waldorf-Astoria and settles down to makin' ourselves as comfortable as possible.

After supper, which consists of a pot roast of beans with a sprinklin' of pork and some bread which comes all the way from the furniture city, judgin' by the piece of wood there was in mine, we repairs to our sleepin' quarters so's we could retire early . . . bein' as how we was due to turn out anywhere after four to catch the snowland limited.

The boys was a little bit irritated so I don't make no attempt to tell them any bedtime stories. I find I'm scheduled to snore on the floor beside the four-poster what is to hold Eddie and Loop. Three other boys is campin' in the room next door and right across the hall is the other two.

It ain't so very long before I can hear the All-American Ramblers givin' old man Insomnia a terrible beatin' . . . but for some reason I can't run into any sand-bags, just layin' like a rug on the floor, starin' up at the ceilin', pop-eyed.

I GUESS three hours must have ticked away when I noticed that Eddie and Loop are movin' about restless like in their sleep. I think they are havin' bad dreams or maybe the bed ain't very comfortable but as long as they don't know nothin' about it I figures they is more blissful than I am.

But all of a sudden Loop, who is on the outside, flops over and sits up. He looks around the room, sort of dazed, bends an elbow over his back and scratches a place between his shoulder blades. Then he begins to wake up and bets busy with

the other hand, rubbin' his stomach region gingerly. His hands begin to fly so fast that it looks like he is exercisin' to keep warm and I decide he's got chilled as the room is cold with the wind and snow blowin' against the window.

Pretty soon Loop looks down and sees me rubberin' up at him. He don't say anythin' for a minute, just sits there starin' at me and scratchin'. Finally he sticks a knee out from under the covers and puts his foot on the floor, pullin' himself out of bed. He tiptoes over to the lamp and fights with a match to light the wick. Then he begins to examine himself like a newly-elected member of the A.E.F. lookin' for cooties.

"Gosh almighty!" I hears him say, as he looks inside the front of his pajamas.

I throws the blankets off and gets out in the chilly air, comin' over to him.

"What's ailin' you?" I asks, tryin' to figure out the Chinese puzzle.

"That's what I want to know," snarls Loop. "You don't reckon I got into any poison ivy somewheres, do you?"

I gives him a scornful look.

"No chance!" says I. "The only bouquets what this country has in the winter time is clusters of icicles."

"I feel like I was all broke out with the prickly heat," moans Loop. "Give me the once over, will you? Maybe I'm comin' down with a compilation of diseases!"

I moves Loop up close to the lamp and makes a survey of his anatomy. Honest I am stunned at what I see. His body is covered with white, puffy welts. It looks like an army of mosquitoes has laid down a barrage on him followed by a bumblebee bombardment reinforced with a counter attack of the hives. And all the time Loop is groanin' and cussin' and scratchin'.

"Maybe it's somethin' I ate," Loop diagnoses, mournfully.

"No . . . it's somethin' what tried to eat *you*," I corrects, steppin' over to the bed and throwin' back the covers quick.

Just as I thought . . . three reddish-brown rascals gallops across the sheet, tryin' to get out of sight.

"What in the name of forked lightnin' is them things?" asks Loop, reachin' for a place farther down on his back.

"Innocence abroad!" says I, "them's the

grandparents of a thrifty crop of bedbugs and you're related to their bites!"

A LOOK of disappointment comes over Loop's face. He dives for his grip and throws his clothes out on the floor and comes up with a funny sort of apparatus that looks like the cross between a pistol and a Scotchman's bagpipe.

"And just to think," he says, "that I carries this insect powder two thousand miles to have them little devils sneak up on me in the dark!"

Eddie is still sleepin' but makin' a bad job of it, what with his twistin' and turnin'. Before I can figure what's up, Loop jumps on the bed and begins to move the handles of the rig-a-ma-jig up and down. The bellows attachment starts to snort and pretty soon the gun part spits out yellow dust which shoots all over the sheet and clouds up the atmosphere.

I backs away, coughin', while Loop goes after the bed like the delousin' department of an agricultural college chasin' tent caterpillars.

Poor Eddie gets a full blast of the powder in the most exposed portion of his face which is his mouth. He lets out a sneeze which just about blows the rest of the covers off the bed and sits up, chokin' and wheezin' like he had both lungs full of asthma.

Loop pays no attention to Eddie. He's a hundred and twenty degrees hot and the only idee he has is to exterminate everythin' that lives.

Eddie can't imagine what's what but he has presence enough of gray matter to tumble out of bed and yell, "Fire!" so loud that it's a wonder the icicles didn't drop off the house.

"Shut up, you animated cartoon!" growls Loop. "This is a extinguisher but she don't work on fires. We're burnin' up with bugs!"

Eddie begins to take inventory, bein' wide awake now and lookin' like a man in the last throes of hay fever. I sizes him up too and offers my sympathy right quick when I sees the condition he's in.

"Great blisterin' hot dogs!" exclaims Eddie, his eyes bulgin', "I'm as full of bites as a picnic grounds!"

And then he begins to scratch, startin' in on his legs and workin' up, systematic.

It ain't long before there's a knock on the door and Jim Coddry busts in from across the hall. The shiek wouldn't have made no hit with the girls then. One eye is bloated shut and he looks like he has a dislocated jaw.

"Greetin's," says I, as Loop stops fumin' the bed and turns around to see who's who.

"Greetin's yourself!" blasts Jim, in a ugly humor. "Is that all you got to say to a guy what's been most et up by bedbugs?"

Loop and Eddie give Jim the cold stare.

"You're not the only bill of fare on the menu," shoots Loop. "Look at us!"

Then the other boys troop into the room, crowdin' around us and each one claimin' to have the most bites. It sounds like a bunch of fishermen . . . only it don't. . . . You can show these kind of bites to prove you've got 'em where all a fisherman can show for his bites is his word which don't count for nothin' in his own country.

Well, Eddie finally wins first premium over Loop by two whoppin' lumps with the other members of the All-American Ramblers trailin' in the near vicinity. It's 2 a.m. by this time and no one showin' any further desire to enter the unconscious state. So we decides to dress and sit listenin' to the snow flurries.

AS soon as we is clothed, Loop organizes a indignation meetin', nominatin' Eddie Jordan temporary chairman, him bein' the worst sufferer up to the immediate present. But Loop ain't so sure but what some other lumps is goin' to show up on him yet which would crowd Eddie out of first place.

When the boys sees that I is the only one not nursin' any insect teeth marks they is beside themselves with envy. It looks for a minute like they is goin' to initiate me into the royal order of the Also Bitten by puttin' me to bed and makin' me stay there until I qualifies for the thirty-third degree.

"I wondered why old M.G.R. was so bloomin' anxious to sleep on the floor," unlimbers Eddie. "It's too bad there ain't man-eatin' carpet bugs. Is his hide any better than our'n?"

I is downright sorry for the boys as I

knows by previous experience how stimulated they feels.

"You'll never realize how much I regrets that the pleasure is all yours," I says, with everythin' but tears in my eyes.

The scratchin' squad gives me a look as full of gratitude as a cannon cracker is full of talcum powder.

"The purpose of this meetin' is to determine ways and means of collectin' damages for this outrage," announces Eddie, ignorin' my expression of sympathy. "This is a time in the course of human events when strong-arm methods is necessary to get satisfaction."

By the cheers Eddie gets you'd think he was runnin' for Congress. The boys is all for gettin' even with the management for throwin' them to the bedbugs.

"I'm just *itchin'* to get revenge!" bellows Loop.

His sentiments is wildly echoed.

Then I comes in with a suggestion which restores my popularity.

"Look here, boys. There's only one way to sting the owner of this house of misery. That's by gettin' at his pocketbook. If we can get him to go heavy on that game tomorrow night. . . . I mean *tonight* . . . and lift all his money through the Tough Mountain Syndicate. . . . I guess that would be sweet revenge—eh, what?"

The boys looks at one another, contemplatin'. They is no longer worried about the Northern Stars. The way they feels now they can drub any two-legged basketball team in the country regardless of size, reputation or complexion. And I knows it.

"We is indebted to the M.G.R. for a valuable idee," says Eddie. "What shall we do with it?"

"I makes a motion that we goes the limit," speaks up Loop. "I guess here's one time they don't pay brother Webster accordin' to his winner's end guarantee."

The motion is passed and I is authorized to place all the money that the Tough Mountain Syndicate will take—and to be sure to cover every dollar put up by the corpulent backer of the Northern Stars.

FOUR o'clock comes and goes but no train does likewise. We sits huddled up in our room, tryin' to keep warm—but

we is ready to grab our things and jump out into the snow the first time we hears any noise like a locomotive.

At six-thirty there is a stir downstairs and the sound of someone shakin' the inside out of a coal burner. We is overjoyed at the prospects of a heat wave so we goes below to borrow some of it.

Try to picture how staggered we is when we runs into the landlord's wife in bedroom slippers and a kimono with her hair in a knot and the same nose, rustlin' ashes out of the stove! Jim Codfry speaks for the bunch when he says, "Pardon me, Mrs. Webster, we thought you was your husband."

Mrs. Webster gives us a look which would have cut a loaf of dry bread in two and snaps, "What do you boys mean comin' downstairs before I calls you?"

Well, I ain't no good at riddles but Jim is equal to the occasion.

"Why, Mrs. Webster," he says, apologetic, "where I come from they always calls me by rattlin' down the stove—and then I comes down and carries out the ashes."

Mrs. Webster breaks out with a smile and hands her pail of ashes over to Jim while we all registers a state of helpless willingness.

"How'd you boys sleep last night?"

I knows this question would cause trouble the minute she asks it. The boys don't none of them look natural or feel natural and they is as cross as a billy goat with nothin' to butt against.

"Sleep?" ejaculates Loop, like he ain't familiar with the word. "Sleep did you say?"

"That's right, young man," warbles she with the nose, "a state of what some people calls suspended *imitation*."

"You means suspended animation," I crossfires, havin' been a victim of this disease most of my life.

"There wasn't nothin' suspended about my animation last night," blurts out Loop. "I'll tell the whole scratchin' world!"

Just then the husband of the landlress busts in on the dialogue. He is in his shirt sleeves and stockin' feet and he has a "what's up?" expression on his face.

"I told you the train would be two hours late. What you boys up so early for?" he snorts.

Eddie steps out from our bunch like a talkin' delegate and walks his bites over in front of the proprietor.

"Yeah—now let me ask a couple," he says, surly like. "You may have told us a few things but there's one important thing what you did not mention."

"The price," guesses the landlord, beamin' like a mint. "My rooms—"

"Are already taken," finishes Eddie.

"Taken?" echoes his two hundred and forty pounds, as blank as a scoreless inning.

"That's the little descriptive word," narrates Eddie. "Inhabited, if she suits you better."

The boys all nod their heads while the landlord makes eyes at his wife and she blinks back.

"Talk Walton Junction," says Mr. Webster, after a while. "I don't get you. . . ."

"Not for another night anyways," assures Loop, rubbin' a lump in under his collar. "To be perfectly frank and lucid and all that . . . did you ever hear tell of a animal that goes by the nom de plume of bedbug?"

The moment he uncorks this simple question, Mrs. Webster gets as hot as the poker to a fireless cooker.

"Why the very idee!" says she, "of mentionin' such a thing as bedbugs in my house. There's not a single one here!"

"You're right, there, Ma'am," agrees Eddie, pointin' to his Exhibit A collection of bites: "You haven't got a single bedbug in the house. They's all married and have large families!"

"See here!" jumps in the landlord, shakin' his fist at Eddie, "I'm not goin' to stand here and have my wife slandered by a bunch of rowdies. If you. . . ."

"Now . . . now . . ." I breaks in. "There's no need of gettin' up in the air over this matter, Mr. Webster. It's been a very disagreeable night and the less said the better: All we wants to know is the size of our bill and the boys will try to forget the size of their bites. We're leavin' you at the toot of the whistle which can't come none too soon."

"You may be leavin' but you're not leavin' me," shouts the landlord. "I'm goin' to Tough Mountain too!"

The boys threw their eyes about from one to the other and Mrs. Webster glares

at her bigger half like his intentions was news to her.

"Got to look after your business interests, eh?" queries Loop.

The landlord puffs up like a bloated milkweed. He circulates a crafty smile.

"Business interests is right. I'm placin' another thousand with the Tough Mountain Syndicate. Want to give you boys plenty to shoot at . . . and lots to holler about."

"That's mighty nice of you, Santa Claus," says Eddie. "We're not much on hollerin' but when it comes to shootin' at anything we're peppered bull's-eyes and shattered clay pigeons."

Just then there is a screech up the railroad track and the boys grab for their belongings like they was goin' to answer a fire alarm.

"How much do we owe?" I asks, flippin' out a roll of bills.

"Call her ten even," he says, shovin' his feet into some shoes. "I ain't got time to change nothin' now."

THE Snow Blow Special comes limpin' in so slow that you can hardly tell when she really stops. The train's been layin' in a drift most of the night and the engineer's darn near starved to say nothin' of froze. So he ties his engine to a hitchin' post and comes in to get a cup of hot coffee which gives us time to dampen our palates before we has to get on board.

"So you boys is the basketball team what plays the Northern Stars tonight—providin' you get to Tough Mountain so far ahead of time?" asks the engineer between gulps.

"We're the intended victims," I says, glancin' at Mr. Webster who is dressed up in his stiffest stiff collar and rarin' to go.

"Well . . . it's too bad they don't run funeral trains on this road," is the engineer's reply.

"Does we look like a flock of corpses?" asks Eddie, stretchin' a piece of bread that's like slingshot rubber.

"Not just yet—but when the game is over you'll be laid out pretty," soothes the engineer, gettin' up from the table and wipin' his dripping mustache. "Them Northern Stars is murderous!"

After this further encouragement we

troops on the train as happy as a bunch of cattle en route to the stockyards.

"Say, maybe this team is tough!" muses Loop, as we sits down inside the coach and tries to scrape the frost off the windows.

"Tough, bedbugs!" I snorts and the boys soon recovers their morale.

The trip to Tough Mountain ain't worth puttin' down in almanac form. We changes cars three times and she snows so much that if the trains we connected with hadn't started out from the place where we connected we'd have never caught 'em. But it seems like those fool trains can eat snow alive the way they crawls through the drifts. At that, I thought there was several times when we'd have to take to snowshoes.

Mr. Webster don't ride in the same car with us which means that he rides in the baggage compartment. It's just as well because we wants to be alone with ourselves and the remnants of our bites. I spends a good part of my time helpin' scratch the other boys. Every time Mr. Webster's name is mentioned it's like throwin' a bomb into a socialist meetin'. They is gettin' to love him more by the minute.

And the first thing they asks for when they arrives is where to find the Tough Mountain Syndicate.

We gets into Tough Mountain so late that we don't have no time to do nothin' except rush for the basketball hall where the game's to be played, just as I predicted. Pat Sullivan, manager of the Northern Stars, is at the depot and warehouse to meet us. He's a heavy-set little fellow with a smooth face and shifty eyes. He tells me he's a graduate of Irontown College and he looks like he's a piece of mined ore.

"Excuse the vacant streets," he apologizes, "the whole town's at the hall waitin' to see the game."

We takes a couple of hacks on runners and plows through the snow, peerin' out the funny windows at the low wooden buildin's and the crooked streets.

"The Syndicate's got an office at the hall," says the manager, answerin' our inquiry.

"You're quite a sportin' town," says I, by way of compliment.

"We're just good spenders," he dodges. "We like to play with money."

"Anything much up on this game?" I questions.

"Oh, about ten thousand," he murmurs, offhand.

"Who's the takers?" comes in Eddie.

"Well—we got a nice little bunch from the Detroit Rails and the Grand Rapids Furniture today . . . bettin' two to one you'd take us over. The teams we've trimmed are hankerin' to get their money back."

"Evidently you boys plays to win?" I queries.

"That's what every good team does," says the manager. "That's why we're not afraid to show the color of our money."

Pretty soon the hacks draw up in front of a high frame buildin' and the driver yells, "All out!" We jumps into the snow and wades up the steps but we can't get in the door on account of the crowd. The manager puts the boys through a window into a private room where they can dress and then he takes me around to the Syndicate office so I can place what money I want and make other financial arrangements.

V

I'M so busy the next few minutes I don't know what's goin' on around me. I have four thousand dollars lurkin' around, itchin' to double itself and I run into Mr. Webster talkin' confidential to the bird who's in charge of the Syndicate. The manager introduces me and I salts down my money at even terms after some argument. I absorbs all of Mr. Webster's dough except the thousand he's brought down with him and I'm so anxious to get it all that I signs an I. O. U. for the thousand that's guaranteed us for the game. Might as well clean up altogether while I'm about it.

"Better stick around and see the game," I invites Mr. Webster, as he turns up his coat collar.

"I'm goin' to stick around," he says, "but just to collect the money."

The bird in charge of the Syndicate laughs and slips the money in a drawer under the window.

I goes out of the office and into the hall. Whew! It's like steppin' from early fall

into midwinter. The hall is packed to the ceilin' with Tough Mountaineers. And they eyes me like I was a hostile foreigner. I has all I can do elbowin' my way through the mob to get a look at the floor.

The hall is so hot that the perspiration oozes out on me. I can almost see the heat waves in the air. There is four big railroad stoves with their iron bellies red hot, radiatin' temperature. I don't see how any human can stand it but everybody but me seems comfortable. When I steps out on the floor the crowd breaks out with a round of cordial hisses which the manager assures me ain't intended for nothin' personal . . . it's just their natural way of greetin'. I returns the greetin' with a bow, showin' every tooth I can, and gets a pleasant little encore that makes me feel as much at home as a travelin' man. I has a vision of bein' inside the crater of an active volcano—and no chance to get out before she erupts!

But I ain't told you about the floor. She's so small that I actually feels crowded standin' on it with the manager. And not twelve feet above the floor there's a string of cross beams which gives you the sensation of bein' inside a cage. My heart does a flip-flop when I pictures how handcuffed Loop's goin' to be as there's no chance for any long shots, the same bein' his specialty. The only way to make a basket, I figures, is to get the ball right up to it and pop it in from underneath the rim.

"What's the idea of the overhead fancy-work?" I asks the manager.

"Well, I'll tell you," he explains so quick that I can tell he's used to answerin' this question. "The man who built this hall originally intended to make it two stories high. He put in the beams but he never laid the upstairs floor."

"And it just never occurred to you to take the beams down when you started playin' basketball, eh?" I asks, pointed like.

The graduate of Irontown College gives me a contemptuous glance.

"Beams don't interfere with our playin'," he shoots. "We've got a real team! What d'ya mean, kickin' about the floor?"

WELL, they's no use tryin' to answer that cross-word puzzle so I instructs the manager to take me to the dressin'

room where I could see the boys. The crowd is gettin' so impatient that their hisses sounds like a locomotive engine lettin' off steam.

"Bring on your All-American Dumbbells!" yells one Tough Mountain enthusiast. "We wants some exercise!"

I lends this bird a deaf ear and crashes into the dressin' room where I finds the boys in various states of discommode. The dressin' room, like every place else, is so small that they all can't dress at once without gettin' their legs in each others' trunks and gougins' one another in the ribs.

"Did you get all the money placed?" the boys asks me, eagerly.

I nods my head, not darin' to trust my voice. But they senses that there's somethin' missin' in my home-brew prescription.

"What's up?" queries Loop.

"Wait till you see where you're goin' to play," I replies. "It's just about large enough for a wrestlin' match—and if I don't miss my guess, that's what this game's goin' to be!"

"Have you seen the Northern Stars yet?" asks Eddie, cussin' as he breaks a shoe lace.

"No—they's still in their little igloos," I answers, tryin' to chirp up the party.

Loop comes over to me, consolins' like.

"Now don't you worry, M.G.R.," he says, pattin' me on the back. "We could play inside a sardine can tonight and make the fish look poor. They's nothin' goin' to beat us the way we feel unless they takes down the baskets and hides 'em where we can't find 'em!"

Just then there's the worst racket that ever busted in on my eardrums. It sounds like the general public howlin' over the income tax publicity. And betwixt and between you can hear the thump of a ball and the pound of feet which shakes the buildin'. The boys looks at one another, their faces full of significance.

"Wow! They's fairly hostile over their local talent, ain't they?" chortles Jim Codfry.

"Hostile? They's like a pack of man-eatin' sharks chasin' a dead race horse," I elucidates. "But by the total number of bedbug bites, don't take this bunch too lightly! I've signed an I. O. U. for the thousand sinkers we're guaranteed and if

we lose we'll have to take out citizenship papers here."

"What!" the bunch hollers, and just as they is goin' to annihilate me there's a bangin' on the door. The manager sticks his head in.

"Ready?"

There's about ten seconds of hesitation and talkin' with fingers and eyebrows. The roar from outside grows until it sounds like a battery of coast-defense guns.

"You'd better hurry, boys—we're a half hour late now," advises the manager with a wise smile, "and it don't pay not bein' punctual in this town."

"Not so fast!" I intercedes. "You're not goin' to rush us off our feet. I wants to meet the guy who's goin' to referee this bout and I also wants to see the time-keepers."

"With pleasure," beams the manager. Then he waits a second and follows up with, "Well, how do you do?"

I stares at him with my face entirely unoccupied.

"I don't believe I quite get you," I says, cautious like.

"I'm the referee," he answers, short and sweet.

The boys draws in their breaths and their eyes bulge.

"Well . . . I'm not exactly glad to meet you," I manages to snort, not offerin' to shake hands. "Trot out your time-keepers and let's see how partial they look!"

"Anythin' to oblige," chuckles the manager, politely, whistlin' between his teeth, "but make it snappy, brothers, because as I said before. . . ."

The manager doesn't have time to finish when in comes . . . who do you think! . . . Well, shiver my vertebrae if it isn't the life-sized, walkin' portrait of the bird who's in charge of the Tough Mountain Syndicate! And that ain't all—his second-hand partner in time-keepin' is a fellow all decked out in basketball regalia, one of the Northern Star substitutes!

IV

"WHAT appears to be the row?" inquires the runner of the Tough Mountain Syndicate, innocent like.

"No row at all," puts in the manager.

"Mr. Goldenrod here just wanted to set his lamps on you guys before the game started."

"Yes," says I, "and I wants to keep my lamps on 'em while the game's goin' on, too!"

But Loop is jabbin' me in the ribs and givin' me the "call-it-off" signal. I'm tryin' to think of a slick way out but all I can think of is a silly tune, "What'll I do?" which keeps gallopin' through my brain cells a mile a minute. Seein' that I appears paralyzed, Loop invites the bunch to follow his example and starts to strip off his shirt, reachin' for his street clothes. The manager lays a hand on Loop's arm and his voice freezes up.

"I don't think I'd do that," he says, meaningly. "It might not be healthy."

Outside the crowd starts stamping their feet which sounds like a foundry six months behind in orders. The boys look to me, just as if I'm a dealer in life preservers . . . but there's nothin' I can do.

"Give us thirty seconds alone and we'll take the floor," I says to the manager, pushin' him out of the dressin' room. The timekeepers backs out, thumbin' their watches so's to call time on us. As soon as they're gone I turns on the bunch.

"We're in for it, boys . . . and we've got to face the music. These birds don't play basketball—they don't even make no pretense at it—but they sure play an airtight skin game! We haven't got a chance in the world buckin' it. The only hope is to go out there on that floor and beat 'em at their own game. It's goin' to be tougher than tough . . . but boys, if you don't do it we're cleaned bag and baggage, tooth and toothbrush!"

"Come on, gang!" snarls Loop, the whites of his eyes turnin' red. The team knows their backs is more than against the wall and they comes around with a savage whoop, flingin' open the door and bustin' through the entrance to the hall, shootin' out on the birdcage floor like a half-spent cyclone.

Say, the hisses they gets makes my reception seem like an afternoon tea. It's the first sight the boys gets of the floor, incidentally, and their shots all hit the beams, makin' them look like a bunch of rookies. The crowd gives them the jeery ha ha and before they can get their bear-

ings the manager and referee is callin' time.

I squeezes my way in, sneakin' along the side of the floor and kneelin' down next to the timekeepers, with my two subs behind me. They is terribly excited and sore because only five men can play basketball at one time . . . but they shouldn't have had no regrets. I'll bet every John Henry of an All-American Rambler in the line-up wished he'd never seen the outside cover of a basketball when he got the first glance at the Northern Star quintet.

Man, oh man! I see them in my sleep yet—five of the rawest-boned, leather-lunged, hairy-chested, iron-muscled, MacFadden-cultured giants in captivity! They looked like the heavyweight division of the New York Police Department in search of a wild night. The shortest player is six feet tall and the only reason he's not as tall as the others is because his arches have fell.

Just then the heat feels so oppressive that I think I'm goin' to drop from a stove stroke. Loop is takin' his place at center against a six feet four midget called Montana . . . and his map sure looks like it. Loop's lean and lanky himself but he sizes up with this raw product as a blade of grass to a stem of alfalfa. The referee tosses up the ball between them and they jump till they almost bump their heads on the beams.

LOOP is quicker and gets the ball while the crowd opens fire with a tonsil-splittin' overture. But Montana grabs Loop, gets his hands on the ball and jerks it away from him, startin' off down the two-by-four floor while our whole team screams, "Foul! Foul!" I jumps up and waves a towel at the referee but some Tough Mountain bird behind gets a hold of my collar and slaps me down on my knees again. The referee is deaf, dumb and blind to all jabberin' and Montana reaches up and drops the ball through the hoop while Loop is still tryin' to tell the self-appointed official that we're not playin' accordin' to football rules. It's evident right from the start that everything's wide open and that Loop isn't goin' to get a chance to score any points on fouls—which we always count on strong.

The first half is a delirium to me with

the playin' floor a mass of legs and arms and the air singin' like it was full of all the noise since the days of Adam's mother-in-law. All I know is that the All-American Ramblers is gettin' knocked down and stepped on by a combination of steam roller and tractor movements. The boys, seein' that there is no chance tryin' to play basketball, goes in for roughin' it up with these backwoodsmen which is about as sensible as tryin' to feed pepper to an elephant.

And to make matters worse than worst, every time one of the boys violates the rules, Pat Sullivan, the nifty little manager-referee, promptly calls a foul and gives his "Winner's end guarantee" team a chance to make a free throw. The first time he pulls this, Loop starts to take the Ramblers off the floor and call it quits but the crowd sets up such a boo that the sweat freezes right on their shirts. To leave that floor is courtin' three kinds of sudden death.

The Northern Stars has a system of short passes, workin' the ball right up to the basket where Soup Stearns, their beanpole forward, plunks it in. Eddie Jordan, at back guard, is neatly put out of the way by the other forward who holds him while Soup rings 'em up. Oh, the boys is scorchin' mad all right—but what can they do? Every once and awhile the Northern Stars lets us score a basket just for the fun of it and the crowd boos some more. I hate to count up the score when the timekeepers decide to call it a first half. I'm awful relieved to find it's only 40 to 8 in their favor. I thought sure it'd be 400. The boys drags themselves to the dressin' room for the ten-minute intermission lookin' like the finish of the Olympic marathon. And I'm wringin' three gallons of nervous perspiration out of my shirt and vest . . . besides havin' manicured all my finger nails clear out of sight with my teeth.

"Cheer up, boys," I says, tryin' to radiate optimism. "The game's only half over. . . ."

"Say somethin' else twice as funny!" blurts out Loop, supersaturatin' a towel with the H two O's that is erodin' from his pores. "We ain't got no more chance of winnin' this game than a rooster has of layin' an egg!"

"Well, if you views it that way she does look pretty slim," I admits, not wantin' the boys to think too heavy on the financial end of the loss. "But I claim it's right shameful the way you're lettin' them baby dolls maul you around. They's got you all buncoed. They's nothin' but a bunch of lumberjack farmers and they doesn't know any more about basketball than I knows about pickin' cherries . . . but they sure knows how to wrap you up and tie you into little thirty-cent packages!"

Say, handin' the boys a line like this in their frames of mind is just like puttin' pop corn kernels in a popper and holdin' it over a sizzlin' fire. They busts out white around the mouths from internal combustion and jumps about the room too hot to stand still.

"Pretty soft for you!" throws in Eddie Jordan, who looks like a troop of White House cavalry has run over him. "Well . . . what's left of me to state is hereby servin' notice that if I comes through this game with my right identity—I'm through for good. Get me? Through for good!"

I reaches out my hand to him quick.

"Shake!" I says. "Them's my sentiments!"

This puts the boys on my side again.

"**W**ONDER when the next train's out?" asks Jim, nursin' a black eye and a cut lip.

"The next train's in," I retorts. "This is all the farther she goes . . . and she goes out when she gets ready. That ought to be just as soon as we finishes makin' our little public appearance!"

"Here's hopin'," grunts Eddie. "This is one of them times when you wishes you'd never been born."

"Did you ever see any place so hot?" asks Loop, drenchin' another towel. "You'd better bring all the dry linen from the dressin' room with you 'cause I don't hanker to get drowned on top of all this. And it wouldn't be bad to have the arnica handy. You sat there like a bump on a boy's forehead all the first half and never offered to so much as give us a piece of adhesive tape!"

"That's because," I hastens to explain, "when I sees you needs doctorin' and starts to beat it for the dressin' room to get the stuff—some big jay grabs me by the nape

of the only neck I've got and throws me for a four-yard loss on the floor."

"Well, don't let's forget the essentials this time," pleads Loop. "I feels the approachin' necessity of first aid."

"Trust me, boys," says I. "I'll take the little old black grip."

And just then we hears the whistle blowin' for the start of the second half. All the boys lets out a groan which comes all the ways from the bottoms of their rubber soles. They troops out to another round of cordial hisses, lookin' about as fresh and full of life as a cluster of wilted lettuce.

I grabs up the gripsack, takin' all the towels we got—including the ones Loop's just got through soakin'—and parks myself down in the same place, next to the timekeepers. There's no one opened any windows and the hall is just like a furnace with the warmth of the human bodies addin' to the heat. It's all you can do to keep from smotherin' but the homefolks seems to stand up under it with the fortitude of hothouse plants. I hasn't dared give any thought as to what is goin' to happen when the game is finished. It's all I can do to keep my throbbin' pulses on the immediate present.

The delirium of the first half is resumed with some tremens added to it. The Northern Stars runs the score up to fifty quicker than a Burroughs Addin' Machine. Then Loop calls for time out and yells for a towel. I heaves a nice, dry cloth out on the floor and the boys pass it around, stallin' for time and lookin' at their measly eight points on the scoreboard.

The Northern Stars, thinkin' this towel wipin' is a professional stunt, calls for a towel too. It's really quite embarrassin'. No one has thought to bring any towels along for the home hopes. There's nothin' for me to do but oblige, which I does with a grand manner that wins the first genuine applause. The manager-referee glowers at me and calls time and I gets the towels thrown back in my face—but I'm glad to get 'em back at all.

It ain't five seconds after the game is started again before Eddie Jordan goes down for the count with a badly wrenched knee. He calls for bandages and I rips open my gripsack, feelin' around for the first-aid stuff when all of a sudden I

realize that I ain't got my gripsack at all.

I've got Loop's—and all I can find in the thing is the apparatus loaded with insect powder. This won't hardly do for a sprained knee and I throws it down with disgust. Loop is callin', "Towel! Towel!" so I heaves the towel out to him again while I'm wonderin' what I'm goin' to do about Eddie.

Them that knows says a good idea never strikes twice in the same place and I'm livin' testimony that this is the only iron-clad, velvet-lined product of mental activity that ever entered my cranium either before or after eatin'.

VII

THE Northern Stars are yippin' for the other towel again and I grabs it up and stuffs it inside the grip and takes the bellows of the insect powder apparatus and sprays the towel thick. Then I quick takes the apparatus and stuffs it inside my coat. It only takes a few seconds and no one is payin' much attention to me, thinkin' I'm all excited about gettin' bandages for my back guard who's layin' out on the floor like a sick horse.

Montana comes idlin' over to the sidelines.

"That towel, Mister—how about our usin' it some more?"

"Oh, the towel?" I says, pretendin' like I'd not understood. "Sure thing. Here you be!" and drags it out of the grip, tossin' it to him.

Montana plunges his drippin' face into it and I almost bites my tongue waitin' to see what's goin' to happen. He stops rubbin' all of a sudden and looks out from behind the towel, blinkin' his eyes and wrinkl'n his nose. Then he tosses the towel to the other Stars what's waitin' their turn and walks around in circles, shakin' his head. I'm the only one that notices this as the crowd's mostly interested in booin' Eddie. The referee comes over to tell me I'll have to put in a substitute as two minutes time is up and Eddie isn't. This is agreeable with me and I calls Eddie off the floor although he's rarin' to sink with the rest of the crew.

They don't get a chance to go on with the game because just as the teams in linin' up, the Northern Stars is thrown into seven

kinds of sneezin' fits. I have to run out on the floor to pick up the towel that's laden with Brady's Scentless Sure-Fire Insect Powder. I jams the towel in the grip and slips the grip to Eddie.

"Eddie, if you love me take this grip to the dressin' room P. D. Q. And when you gets there, take the towel out and hide it where you can't find it. Then take all our belongin's and pitch 'em out the window in the snow drifts—and wait for us till this fracas is over. Don't ask no questions—beat it!"

Eddie gives me a funny look but he can tell I got somethin' else up my sleeve besides my winter underwear. He takes the bag and limps out of the hall, the crowd makin' way for him and thinkin' nothin' about it. Everyone is wonderin' what's struck the Tough Mountain huskies, and even my boys can't interpret their sneezes. A fan sittin' next to me thinks it's an acute attack of the flu and gets out his handkerchief to breathe through so's the germs won't get up his nose.

I wigwags to Loop that we got 'em on the run and though Loop can't guess nothin' he knows enough to kick to the referee because the game ain't goin' on. With the score 50 to 8 it don't look natural that our boys should all at once be eager for more punishment. The Northern Stars is standin' around, wheezin' like a chorus of asthmatics, their eyes runnin' rivers. The referee won't start the game till he finds out what's the matter and Montana begins to point at where he thinks I am but he can't see past his nose. I knows things are desperate but I'm ready to play my cards when I have to show 'em. The wise little college graduate of a skin game manager comes trottin' over to me.

"Where's that towel you lent our boys?" he snaps, surly like.

"Where's your requisition?" I retaliates.

"None of your buffoonery!" The manager is hoppin' mad. He stoops down and jabs his hand into the bunch of used towels. They're all soppin' wet but I points out the wettest one.

"Go ahead—take it if you want it. Your steam-heated Alaskans just about ruined it anyhow."

"This the one?" he inquires, suspiciously, holdin' it close to his nose and goin' over it like a customs house official.

"How could it be any other?" I throws back.

The manager turns the towel over to Montana whose vision is still about seven-seven and Montana feels it, sniffin' at his fingers. The other Stars crowd around like a lot of "help the blind" boys but they don't get any more kick out of the towel so they can't do nothin'. And all this time Loop is walkin' around like a caged-up panther, ravin' about everythin' in general. He's got the whole crowd so down on him that they is gnashin' their teeth. He's callin' the Northern Stars "quitters" and "bums" and "sneeze babies" and all the choice names he can think of which are calculated to insult without causin' a general riot.

THe first wave of sneezin' gets over but the eyes is still liquidatin' when the referee calls the game to order. But she's a different complex now. The All-American Ramblers is once more a ball club—a razzle-dazzlin', rip-roarin', thunder-bustin' outfit . . . the reason bein' that they ain't got no opposition. Montana jumps at center when he hears the whistle blow although he can't see the ball. The others can't see it either but they ain't worried none. All they got to do is stand around and let their eyes do the runnin' because they're so far out in front they don't know what a caboose looks like. Loop takes the ball right down the floor and shoves it through the basket on a close-up shot. The crowd laughs. Score, 50 to 10. I glances at my watch. Fifteen good, big, juicy minutes left. A five to one chance and no takers! Everything has been took. Back goes the ball to center and back it goes for another basket for us. This process is repeated, with variations, till the score gets to 50-20. Jim not even hopeful yet. . . . I'm just lookin' on and feelin' sort of numb, eyes on my ticker every other second. If the second half would last an hour and the Northern Stars would stay under the influence of Brady's powdered extract, it's my opinion we would overhaul 'em.

But it's surprisin' what a short time it takes to count by twos when you're hittin' the rim about once every fifteen seconds. First thing I know the score's 50-40 with the crowd gettin' worried, the referee gazin' anxiously toward the timekeepers and

the eyeless Northern Stars staggerin' about tryin' to get in front of Loop and the other members of our team who're slippin' in and out like honeybees to a hive.

Three minutes to play! I'm up on my feet with the best Indian war whoop ever invented by a white man which even sends shivers down my spine. The boys responds to my encouragement like a flock of chickens at a dinner call. All they got to do is keep out of the way of the lumberin' lumberjacks and no matter if the Stars is clustered around the basket imitatin' a five-man defense, they can't stop nothin' that they can't see. The tears is runnin' down their faces like someone has left the water runnin' in the front hose on the lawn. But they is a stubborn bunch of gladiators. It's like the magician says, "The more you try, the less you see" . . . which don't prevent them from keepin' on tryin'. They is furious at us and would slaughter us without even pagin' the butcher if they had all their necessary faculties.

With the score 50 to 48 and a half a minute to play I'm as looney as a goofer bird. I can see all my money comin' back to me after I've kissed it good-by and packed it in alcohol. But the effects of Brady's bedbug antiseptic is beginnin' to wear off and Montana is gettin' back his normal vision. He takes a cock-eyed squint at the scoreboard and blows the last remnants of the powder out of his system with an angry sneeze. The Ramblers ain't climbed clear up from the bottom of the well for nothin' how-so-ever. And before Montana can get his peepers wide open, Loop has brought the house down with two rapid-fire shots under the basket, jumpin' us into the lead.

There's no game ever been played the equal of this fiasco and right there is where strong men went weak and weak men went strong. I bounds out on the hardwood arena, yellin' bloody murder and yellow-back novels because time is up and we've won, 52 to 50—but before I gets a chance to curl my arms affectionately about Loop, the referee steps in.

"What's your hurry?" he asks, while the crowd takes up the refrain.

"Hurry?" says I. "The game's over!"

"Did my timekeepers say so?" he returns.

"No; but my watch did!"

"Go back and sit down!" he orders.

"This game ain't anywhere's near over yet!"

VIII

WHAT good does it do me if I'm a conscientious objector? The boys raise an awful row but the eyeballs of the Northern Stars is dried up now . . . and they can see our finish. The crowd can, too! Pandemonium is a primary word when it comes to describin' this scene.

I'm cryin' and sobbin' and carryin' on somethin' hysterical. Folks are tearin' their hair and collars and throats. The boys looks to me with despair written over their faces as the referee tosses the ball up at center and Montana pounces on it like he did before his eyes went back on him. There's the wildest mix-up I ever see, with sluggin', trippin', holdin' and shovin'—And finally, out of all the mess comes Montana to put the ball through the hoop for a tie score! Everyone's usin' everyone else's back for a bass drum. And while they're doin' that I races out on the floor, grabbin' Loop by the arm.

"Follow me!" I yells, runnin' for the front exit, and wavin' to the rest of the boys.

They don't need any urgin', even though they is about ready to drop in their tracks. We is to the doorway before the crowd realizes what's up. Then they lets up an awful howl and the manager and the whole Northern Star team takes after us.

The citizenry near the exit tries to interfere but I has Loop's patented powder shootin' device out now and shoots clouds of insect killer into their faces. We fights our way through a mass of sneezes, out of the hall and up to the window of the Tough Mountain Syndicate. Mr. Webster's standin' at the outside door, lookin' all alone as he's the only one not interested enough to watch the game. We's in such an awful hurry that we pays no attention to him. I smashes in the window with my fist and shouts to Loop.

"Get in there and get our money!" I commands. "Four thousand berries is all we want. Don't touch nothin' else!"

Loop dives through the window, almost rippin' out the sash. The other boys forms a five-man defense around it while I steps out in front, pointin' my bellows arrange-

ment toward the narrow exit door that everyone's got to come through to get at us. Mr. Webster tries to raise an objection but Jim Codfrey kicks him out of the doorway into the snow and the landlord lays there like a broken piece of china. Loop is just crawlin' through the window with his fists full of greenbacks when Pat Sullivan, the schemin' little manager, dashes from the hall right into the muzzle of the insect powder sprayer. I lets him have both barrels. He backs into the arms of the Northern Stars, chokin' and spittin'. It ain't long before I lays down a regular smoke screen of powder which is well-nigh impenetrable. Jim holds the outer door open and the wind blows through, wafting the powder inside that stuffy hall till the interior is one continuous outbreak of "Ker-choos!" The Northern Stars gets the same dose all over again only worse. The whole crowd is laid out stiff.

We don't wait to leave our handwritin' on the wall but dashes right outdoors into below zero weather with the boys riskin' pneumonia germs by the millions—but they is so hot that they don't stop to think they's dressed like a flock of cross-country runners. I leads 'em around to the side of the buildin' where Eddie Jordan is waitin' with their street clothes jammed in grips—and we grabs these and finds the road somehow and starts kangaroooin' it in the direction of the railroad station. There ain't no one in sight and the night is dark—but of course the snow lights things up a bit. It's a good half mile anyhow and we don't

know whether there'll be a train there when we gets there.

THAT bein' the case, you should have heard the cheer that goes up when we catches the gleam of a locomotive headlight. From that moment I've always claimed that Dame Fortune is a grand old woman. There, settin' on the track in front of the depot, is a combination freight and passenger train. The station agent is so scared at seein' a bunch of white figures come streakin' toward the depot that he runs out and hides in a snowdrift. We don't linger to buy tickets but piles into the only coach while I hunts up the engineer to inquire when the magnificent string of cars he has hitched to his steam buggy is due to leave.

"We're waitin' on the conductor now," he says, polite enough. "But soon as he shows up, we're off!"

"I've got five hundred dollars that says don't wait for the conductor," I proposes.

The engineer scratches his head and looks at the money.

"What good is a conductor on this road anyhow?" he drawls, as he puts his hand on the throttle.

It's almost fifteen years now and I ain't seen that engineer since, but I sends him a post card of gratitude every memorable anniversary.

The All-American Ramblers stopped ramblin' after that and now I got a quintet at home what tears up the parlor rug . . . and a wife what can't understand why I'm so tender-hearted toward bedbugs.

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Hoodooed Hoopsters

By JOHN STARR

"**P**IE! You may want pie, but what I'm telling you is, you'll get over-ripe eggs if you don't give Redding a basketball team that will beat Brownsburg."

The words exploded from the lips of Kitty Gilroy, owner of the "MILK & HONEY" restaurant. She was Redding's Civic Booster No. 1, and let the world know it.

Condon Goodspeed was on the receiving end. He sighed, sensing that a beautiful, quiet life must be ahead of him as Redding's new basketball coach.

Beat, beat, beat!

It was the same old cry Conny had heard everywhere since he and Kitty graduated from Midland U. five years before, and she returned to her little hometown to run a restaurant, while he went out to engage in the heartless and thankless racket of coaching basketball.

Beat Brownsburg!

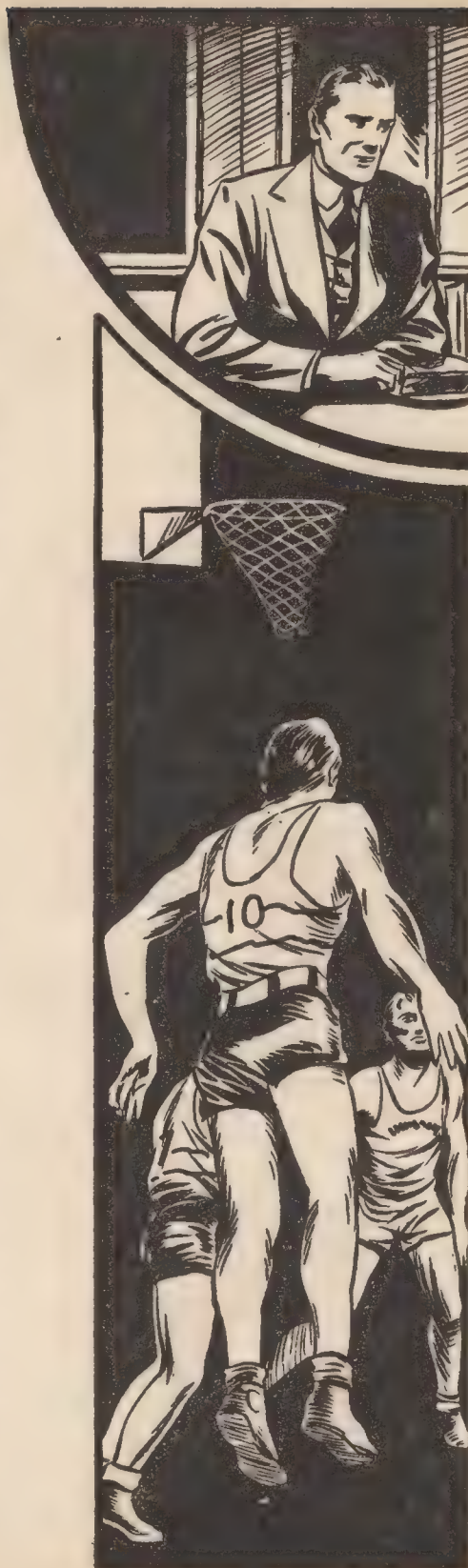
Less than a week ago, Conny had vowed never again to indulge in the bitter, senseless rivalries born of basketball. Basketball was a game. It was supposed to be fun. Why should he grit his teeth and resolve to cut Brownsburg up for hash?

"I haven't anything against Brownsburg," he told Kitty.

Kitty stamped indignantly.

"You will have! They'll put something over on you. They keep Redding isolated. They try to show the rest of the state we don't amount to much—so they can eventually take our courthouse away from us. They have our whole town cowed. They cheat us out of basketball games. And they beat us out of a state road just this year so we can't have home basketball games in our new gym after the weather gets bad."

"Hm," said Goodspeed, looking down at Kitty. Her wide, brown eyes, her lips, her chin—her whole upturned face—were pleading:



"How's the pie today?"

"Elegant! Kitty snapped. 'Better than that rotten team of yours!'"



Pie-eating Coach Goodspeed nursed those Redding bucket loopers into as hot a quintet as that cassaba circuit had ever seen. But the big-league Brownsburg jinx clung to them like the Seven Year's Itch!

"Beat Brownsburg!"

Conny bit his lips, and ran powerful fingers through his yellow hair. Tiny sparks in his eyes mounted into flame. He squared his shoulders. Here was a challenge, a call to battle, and he never in his life had been able to resist that call.

CONNY GOODSPEED poured basketball into the youth of Redding High.

"All right, you turtles, move before you grow fast. . . . Harben, you're twice too slow on that dribble under . . . Francisco, shake the lead out of your pants and follow in to take the ball off the backboard. . . . You forwards know how that criss-cross goes. Let's see you put some zip into it. . . . Pass that ball, Howell. Pass it! Do you have to have an opening as big as a railroad tunnel? . . . Come on, Helms, get in there and stop Rubush. What're you waiting for, an introduction to him? Pardon my social blunder. . . . No, no, no! All of you—flock around. Let me tell you about that spot pass again."

In the weeks preceding the opening of the season, the players were convinced that their running, passing and dribbling, put end to end, would have reached around the earth.

And Kitty Gilroy kept drumming into their ears, "Beat Brownsburg!"

The older generation said it couldn't be done, just as an older generation always does; and the younger generation, as usual, had no more sense than to think it could be done.

The team became a pack of whooping, back-slapping hyenas who, under Conny's inspiration, laid out their old friends, Williamsboro, 27-18 in their opening game.

"Not bad," Conny told them, "that's as many games as you won all last year."

They easily took Rossville and New Paris next.

"Now," said Conny, "all you have to do is beat Brownsburg."

Brownsburg was not asleep to the fact

that a sound beating might be in store for them. They got busy, town and team.

But Redding townsfolk only moaned. Their leading apostles of gloom were Hez Rubush whose son, Hughes, was the team's left forward, and Ab Howell, father of "Screech," first string backguard.

"Beat Brownsburg? It can't be done!" they took turns in telling Conny.

THE game was played in Redding. The score at the half was 12-12, and a roaring Redding team steamed out for the third quarter.

Woody Harben was spearhead of the Redding attack. He came in and took the first center tip from Francisco, pivoted and dribbled down a wide-open slot to go in the air and push one over the rim.

Slippery Helms, floorguard, stole the next pass from the fingertips of a Brownsburg forward, dribbled down the sideline, hooked a pass into Harben and Harben went under and pocketed a fast one off the backboard. He netted a long one for his third straight field goal and Brownsburg took time out.

The rest helped them get together and they matched Redding scoring for the remainder of the third quarter which ended 24-18.

Redding was about to believe in miracles, though Conny was not letting himself and his team be deceived.

"The toughest grind is ahead," he told the boys. "Brownsburg has a veteran team."

And experience told in the last eight minutes. Brownsburg tied the score at 28-28. Instead of resting, Redding speeded up its attack and was holding even at 31-31 with three minutes to go. They were overplaying and finally began to fumble and make wild passes.

Brownsburg seized the opportunity to turn on more heat and pulled away to win 37-33.

Redding fans, even Kitty Gilroy, moped away from the gym. To them, the game was only another humiliation at the hands of a rival they detested. But Conny thought his kids looked plenty hot.

He breezed into Kitty Gilroy's restaurant, chin up, and smiling.

"What kind of pie you got?"

Kitty scowled at him.

"Didn't I tell you you'd get eggs instead of pie if you didn't beat Brownsburg? We'll, be watching your step. When we are hemmed in by snow drifts on our one lone miserable mountain road, and the citizens fully realize our new gym is a dead loss in winter, you'll hear moaning that will reach you to the moon. It would have been different if Brownsburg hadn't beaten us out of a state highway, just as they beat us out of everything. We could have had home games all winter. And if you had beaten Brownsburg tonight, it would have carried you over for a year, but now look out!"

"There's another Brownsburg game coming," Conny reminded her.

"Yes," she said hopelessly, "on Brownsburg's floor."

THE Brownsburg game ended home contests in Redding. It was the first of December. Any day, the main road, which went five miles west to cross Black Oak Ridge at Buffalo Gap, and then came back six miles on the other side of the ridge to join the state highway at Brownsburg, was due to become impassable to modern traffic.

Except for basketball practice, the big Redding gymnasium was a deserted structure. To get to the scenes of their remaining games, Redding would walk to Brownsburg over the three-mile "short cut," a trail they had hoped to persuade the state to make into an improved highway, and take cars from there.

The future looked discouraging but Conny Goodspeed ate pie and fought on.

The Redding first team took nine games in a row. The gloomiest citizens, except Hez Rubush and Ab Howell, saw, at least, the faint glimmer of a brightening future.

The town was becoming basketball-minded. Woody Harben, sensational forward, became an idol. Business picked up at the "MILK & HONEY." Every evening the younger generation flocked in to be near Woody who wanted to be near Coach Goodspeed who wanted to be near Kitty Gilroy. Dyed-in-the-wool grumblers talked of "taking Brownsburg" the next time, and there was almost an era of good feeling.

Public spirited Kitty Gilroy had high hopes.

"Conny, we'd have a swell town, if we had a good highway," she said. "And Brownsburg is just a week away. I can hardly wait."

He grinned.

"If we don't win at Brownsburg, you and I had better not come back, had we?"

"We can't possibly lose," she said.

"I don't see how we can, either," Conny told her.

THE main road from Redding had not yet been closed by bad weather when the evening of the return game at Brownsburg arrived. Half of Redding accompanied the team, and noisily backed the boys that Coach Goodspeed was sending out to take a tenth straight game.

But no one, on either side, expected an easy time. Coach Speck Lawrence had his Brownsburg boys pointed to the minute. They held a three-point lead at the quarter. And Conny saw there was something wrong with Redding. Hughes Rubush was always a step too slow and Screech Howell's usually brilliant dribbling looked like a slow motion picture of hop-scotch.

At the half Brownsburg was leading 18-10.

Conny hustled his confused athletes to their dressing room for a pointed consultation. Ab Howell came paddling along behind with the shining mug of a prophet who had just cleaned the bases in his own home town.

"What did I tell you?" he said.

Hez Rubush bogged in next with an identical message of hope. He looked at Conny and he looked at all the tender young worldings who had launched upon this basketball enterprise with such high ambitions.

"See! What did I tell you?"

Conny clouded up and looked down on Ab and Hez. Lightning flashed in his eyes. Thunder rolled in his throat. He jerked a tough thumb toward the door that led from the room. Ab and Hez correctly perceived they were getting the doctor's orders to start traveling for their health.

When they were gone, Conny swung around at his regulars.

"Now. What did I tell you?"

Hughes Rubush and Screech Howell looked down their noses. Woody Harben came up with the proper answer.

"You said we couldn't beat Brownsburg unless we remembered our teamwork, and drove hard."

"Correct. Rubush, you can't hit long ones. Work that ball down the floor. . . . And Howell, you dribble as if you expected to drop over with heart failure any minute. . . . You fellows are all in condition and I want to see some action in this next half. You can win this game, yet, but not by dragging around waiting for your arteries to harden. Take time to get into formation, and then, break fast. Now, I'm going to have a board handy, and if you punkin-heads don't play the way I've been drilling it into you for the last four months, I'm going to raise some blisters that will be the talk of the town. And they won't be on your elbows."

In the third quarter, the team tried to get going, but the trouble of the first half held over. The split-second precision of perfect teamwork was not there. Woody Harben saw the minutes passing with Brownsburg increasing its lead. When a time-out and analysis of troubles failed to improve teamwork, he took the game into his own hands and ran wild to out-score Brownsburg for the third quarter and pull up to within four points of them at 26-22.

But no man could hold the pace, at which he drove himself, for many minutes. He slowed down in the fourth and the team went to pieces with Howell and Rubush, now trying too hard to come through, falling down utterly. Brownsburg fans shrieked their delight and Redding sat, mute and stunned.

The final score was 35-25, and Redding moaned as the last gun barked. All but Hez Rubush and Ab Howell. They came around looking wise.

Conny snarled, "I suppose you two think you've won the pennant in the prophets League."

"Whatever happened?" Kitty Gilroy agonized.

"I don't know," said Conny. "Our team is ten points better than Brownsburg. There was something wrong with Rubush and Howell."

WITH Redding floundering in the sub-basement of despair, a payment came due on the gymnasium. The town's nine hundred and twenty-three residents remem-

bered it simultaneously. They growled on every cracker box and rocking chair in the village.

Kitty sang blues. "Conny, the gym has not made a dime to date, and when I was fighting for it, I told everyone it would be self-supporting. Of course, if Brownsburg hadn't beaten us out of that good road"

Conny struck a blue note, too, "Yeah, and then we have the mildest winter in a lifetime. If we'd only known, we could have scheduled home games every month."

He dug his fingers into his yellow hair. "What kind of pie you got?"

As he ate cherry pie, Kitty said, "I could weep. I could fight. I could even swear. This town is now down on basketball, gymnasiums, community spirit— It'll be a whole year before we can play Brownsburg again, if ever."

Conny scowled. He remembered Hez Rubush and Ab Howell gloating because they had hit for an average of 1.0000 in the Pessimists Conference. Then, he looked up at Kitty, and his eyes were brighter.

"Good old inspiring pie," he said, and his eyes were flashing. "How about an invitational tourney next month to show these muttering Minnies what a basketball team can really do for a town? The roads won't go bad, now. I'll book a couple of bigger schools I know. They'll bring a whole caravan of fans. We'll fill up Ab Howell's hotel for the first time in its history, and eat up all the groceries in the town. We'll bring in Brownsburg and maybe get a chance—"

"Yes, get a chance to let them finish ruining us."

Conny looked up sharply and his eyes snapped.

"Say, are you going pessimist, too?"

"Well, with Rubush and Howell—"

"Whoa! Wait!" Conny called out suddenly. "Rubush and Howell. Isn't that the combination Brownsburg worked on to beat Redding out of the state highway?"

"It certainly is," Kitty answered. "They got Hez Rubush to feeling the road should come in past his filling station at the west end of town, and then convinced Ab Howell it should come in past his hotel at the east end. There was such a dogfight between the Rubush and Howell fac-

tions, the State Highway Department decided we didn't care whether we got a road or not."

"Listen," said Conny, "we're going to corner those two old fuddy-duddies."

Kitty saw the light.

"Brownsburg has been working on them in some way," she declared.

SHE and Conny confronted Ab Howell first. Kitty swung from the ankles. She knew who worked on Ab Howell.

"Ab Howell, what's Jud Walker been talking to you about?"

Ab's eyes bobbed around as if he were hunting a window to dive through.

"Out with it!" Kitty demanded. "You're the biggest boob in this town. Those Brownsburg gangsters can always come around and soft soap you into making a goose of yourself."

Ab spluttered as if blowing out a mouthful of fuzz. Conny stepped directly in front of him, and he had something on his face besides a healthy complexion. He tossed his yellow hair and thrust his chin forward, and reminded Ab of a serious young bovine creature that was about to paw the earth and start charging.

Ab broke down.

"Screech is my boy and I have a right to look out for his best interests. All five of the main players on the Brownsburg basketball team two years ago have heart trouble and can't do a day's work."

Kitty said, "According to Jud Walker. Did you go down and investigate for yourself?"

"W-e-e-l-l—"

"Well, no!" said Kitty.

Conny said, "But anyhow, you told Screech he had to take it easy and not strain himself, or you wouldn't let him play basketball at all."

Ab's mouth dropped open.

"Did Screech tell you?"

"Of course not," Kitty exploded. "Coach Goodspeed is not as dumb as you are. He can put two and two together."

"Yes," snapped Conny. "Now let's go out and get Hez Rubush."

"Okay." Kitty flung a parting look at Ab and said scornfully, "Everytime Brownsburg wants to start something in this town it always finds Ab Howell and Hez Rubush ready to help."

She was right. Court Riley, from Brownsburg, had told Hez Rubush the heart-rending story of the former Brownsburg basketball stars who were supposed to be physical wrecks. And Hez had gulped it down, and admonished his athletic offspring to ease up on those lung-bursting fourth-quarter victory drives if he didn't want to spend the rest of his life in a wheel-chair, or something.

Brownsburg had put over another fast one, and Hez Rubush and Ab Howell were the suckers.

Conny was mad and steamed up for vengeance.

"What's the use?" sighed the older heads. "Brownsburg'll make goats out of us again."

But the basketball team and the school shared their coach's feeling, and inasmuch as there was everything to gain and nothing to lose that wasn't already lost, anyway, the town reluctantly consented to play host to an invitational tourney.

Grossport, Cedar Falls and Brownsburg were to be the guests. Nearly a thousand tournament tickets were sold. Redding citizens showed slight indications of enthusiasm and Ab Howell even washed the windows of the Howell House.

"First time that's happened since I was in high school," said Kitty. "I believe Redding *will* become public-minded some day, Conny. How's the team?"

Conny's face lighted up like a window display.

"Great, and we drew Brownsburg for the second game."

The first game, between Grossport and Cedar Falls, was to start at seven-thirty Friday evening. The other game was to start at eight forty-five. On Saturday afternoon the losing teams were scheduled to play a consolation at two o'clock with the championship battle to start at three.

AT four o'clock on Friday, a blizzard, the only storm of the winter, hit the little town. It had started with rain, turned to sleet, and now there was snow half knee deep. The black skies overhead were no darker than the gloom that enveloped Redding.

Conny Goodspeed and Kitty Gilroy stood and looked out through the front window of the "MILK & HONEY." Be-

yond the courthouse square loomed the gymnasium, a ghost in a shroud of snow. Kitty's fists were clenched, her fingernails cutting into her palms.

"No one can get here," she gasped.

Goodspeed nodded. His face was grim.

"I guess this finishes basketball, and me, in Redding."

"And me, too," Kitty sighed. "I persuaded the town to build the gym, and what's worse for the moment, I've had all the merchants lay in an extra supply of food stuffs—and I don't mean canned goods. And the Aid Societies of the churches have mountains of sandwiches and oceans of soup. When you set the table for a thousand, and no one comes—I'll bet the local merchants will lose three or four hundred dollars, and I'm to blame."

Conny squared his shoulders defiantly at the swirling snow outside. He looked at his wristwatch.

"Anyway, it's more than three hours till the opening game. Something may happen. I've known it to."

Kitty looked at Conny as if she thought he believed in fairies.

"Conny," she said emphatically, "nothing can come over Black Oak Ridge on a night like this."

Conny looked at her own extra stock of pies, racked six deep on the restaurant counter.

"What kind of pie you got?" he asked. There was the hint of a smile on his face. But he couldn't outgame Kitty.

"Apple, chocolate, cherry, pineapple, and lemon," she answered.

"Two cherries, and a quart of milk," he ordered.

He looked up at the end of the first pie.

Kitty said, "Lucky it's so bad outside that everyone stays in. Otherwise, we'd probably be mobbed."

Conny quaffed the cream from his quart of milk.

"I can't give up. It's stormy but it's not really so cold. I think Cedar Falls will be here."

"Hunch?" asked Kitty.

"No, they're like that at Cedar Falls."

"How's their team?"

"Better than Brownsburg, but we can beat 'em if we get the breaks."

AT six o'clock there was a roaring through the main street of Redding, and it wasn't the storm. Conny was coming across the courthouse yard from the gym where he had inspected the lights and the heating plant to see if they were working properly. He looked down the street and saw the red and green eyes of great automotive monsters plowing their way through the snow.

He ran to the door of the "MILK & HONEY."

"Kitty," he yelled, "it's Cedar Falls."

Kitty ran out. The motorcade was pulling along in front of the courthouse now. Radiators were steaming. Windows of the buses were frosted over. Snow was packed on windshields except for the little spots kept clear by the clicking wipers. Motors raced, horns blared and sirens on private cars screamed the news of their arrival.

Kitty could not refrain from cheering. Conny jumped on the step of the lead bus and directed the delegation to the gymnasium. The cars began disgorging scores of visitors.

"It's warm in the gym," Conny called to them. Then, he called aid society ladies by telephone and told them to bring on their food.

A few minutes later he was going into the "MILK & HONEY," accompanied by a robust, muscular middle-aged man.

"We'll have one game, anyway," he sang out lustily. "Col. Brewington, this is Kitty Gilroy, Redding's leading booster."

Kitty exclaimed, "However did you get here, Col. Brewington?"

"Oh, we had all the skid chains and tow-lines in Cedar Falls with us," he said.

"And the Colonel handled motor transports in France," Conny volunteered.

"Did you see anything of the other teams?" Kitty asked.

The Colonel nodded.

"Brownsburg flatly refused to come and they discouraged Grossport into turning back."

"And you came, anyway."

Col. Brewington smiled.

"Yes. In the first place, I knew all the expense and trouble that you would have gone to to entertain us. And in the second place, at Cedar Falls we just aren't in the habit of turning back."

THE referee's opening whistle blast sounded promptly at seven-thirty in Redding's gymnasium. There was only half of the anticipated crowd, but the courageous trip of Cedar Falls had gained that town a warm spot in the heart of Redding and there was a high feeling of enthusiasm and fellowship such as Redding had never known.

The other two teams, having failed to come, representatives of Redding and Cedar Falls agreed to crown the winner of their game the tournament champion, and then follow the game with a dance.

Conny had his team in great spirits, after the Brownsburg hoax, and they pulled away to an early lead. Cedar Falls began to click in the second quarter and trailed by only two points at the half which ended 17-15.

In the second half the two teams battled doggedly minute after minute with Redding holding on to the long end of the score by the scantest of margins. Redding had a two-point advantage with a minute to go but Francisco let the Cedar Falls center get away from him and dribble in to knot the count at 36-36. Seconds later the gun ended the regulation playing time.

The overtime period was a furious melee that had the fans stamping their feet and screaming. The first minute passed without a score, and the second. And there was but ten seconds of the period left when Woody Harben arched one from center that fell through to give Redding the game.

Amid the milling of the crowd, following the end of the game, Conny Goodspeed felt a hand upon his arm. He turned and saw Lawrence, the Brownsburg coach.

Lawrence said, "It was a pretty tough trip, but we got here in time to play the second game."

"Second game!" said Goodspeed.

Lawrence grinned as one who was sure he could out-smart a fox.

"Sure. Brownsburg and Redding play the second game in—" he looked at his watch, "—in twenty minutes."

The Brownsburg players came onto the floor. They had taken their time and walked over the ridge to Redding arriving just after the start of the second half and keeping their presence a secret until the end of the Cedar Falls-Redding game.

CONNY GOODSPEED'S face flushed in anger. He saw the trap the Brownsburg coach had laid for him.

"You told Col. Brewington you weren't coming," Conny reminded him.

Speck Lawrence merely shrugged his shoulders.

"But that was not an official withdrawal, and we changed our minds. All we were obligated to do was be on hand at the time set for our game to begin."

He was technically within his rights though much could have been said about his sportsmanship. Col. Brewington came to the assistance of Goodspeed.

"Why not wait, play them tomorrow?"

"No," Lawrence insisted, "We play Redding tonight—and you, tomorrow."

Conny Goodspeed straightened. Angri-ly, he ran his fingers through his yellow hair. His eyes glared steadily at Speck Lawrence.

"Okay, Lawrence. We play tonight," he said. "And we'll see whether you play tomorrow."

By now the crowd was aware of what had happened. Redding's youth was booing but the oldsters shook their heads and wagged their tongues.

"No use. No use. Brownsburg is just too slick for us."

Kitty Gilroy's eyes flamed.

"She is, is she?" Kitty snapped. "All right, hang around. Tonight's the night she gets the cure for what ails her."

The Cedar Falls delegation, to the last man, joined the Redding rooters as the game got under way.

BIG Pershing Francisco got the initial tip-off for Redding and Peaches Greenbury, starting in place of Hughes Rubush, came in fast and snared it. He hooked a sharp pass to Woody Harben toward the right sideline and Woody shot and hit.

The crowd cheered and Conny smacked his big fists down on his knees.

"That's flying the mail," he said to Rubush and Screech Howell, who was also held from the starting lineup. "We've got to get the jump on 'em before we wear out. Then, I'll pull Greenbury and Fletcher and put you two back in, and we'll just hold our lead."

On the next play there was a double shuttle down court between Fletcher and Francisco. Francisco drove in, went high in front of the basket and one-handed a beauty.

The Brownsburg captain tongue-lashed his mates. They tightened their defense, but Redding, with such cheering behind it as it never had known before, played inspired ball. Greenbury slipped his guard and hit two more from the field. The Brownsburg players took time out with the score 8-0 against them.

Theirs was a veteran lineup which diagnosed its troubles quickly. Returning to action, they told a different story. They spread an impregnable zone defense which checked abruptly the down-court drives of Redding. And they closed the gap in the score until it stood at 8-6.

Woody Harben gasped to Francisco, "They're tying me up. Coach says shoot a few long ones in a place like this. Try some."

He hit on his first effort but missed the next. Woody came into mid-court, snared a pass, wheeled and arched in a long one.

The quarter ended. The second quarter started. The Brownsburg team began a machine-like assault upon the Redding basket. Calmly, relentlessly, they cut down the Redding lead.

Conny Goodspeed muttered, "That Cedar Falls overtime took more out of the boys than I thought."

Still, he held Howell and Rubush out of the game. Brownsburg tied the score, pulled away and led 23-20 at the half, because of the very obvious fact that the substitutes, Greenbury and Fletcher, could not stand the pace.

It was even obvious to Hez Rubush and Ab Howell, who still smarted from the memory of their last tricking at the hands of Brownsburg. They stormed in upon Conny between halves.

"What's the matter with our sons? We'd be winning this game if they were in there."

Conny grinned.

"I've been sort of hesitating because of their hearts."

Ab Howell, scrawny little runt of man, flushed. He tip-toed and shook his fist under Conny's nose.

"You put Screech into this game. And

don't you let him come off the floor until he has to be carried off. We're going to win this game. I'm foundered on these Brownsburg monkeyshines."

"And that goes for me too," Hez said.

CONNY GOODSPEED poured inspiration and instruction into his players. A revitalized Redding team came from its dressing room. Hez Rubush and Ab Howell gave their sons final enthusiastic slaps upon the back. Redding had never seen such paternal concern. A wave of confidence surged inexplicably through the fans as the Redding players dashed into position.

The regular combination of Harben, Rubush and Howell clicked swiftly for baskets. Brownsburg held its lead by the narrow margin of one point. Flying feet beat a roaring tattoo upon the hardwood floor. Five men dived at a loose ball. Guards clung to their men like leeches. Redding took the ball on an out-of-bounds. Slippery Helms threw it in. The floor seethed with determined athletes as Redding fought for an opening and the walls echoed blast on blast of cheers as Rubush finally drove in and pushed one over the rim to give Redding a one-point lead. But Brownsburg pulled even a minute later and the third quarter ended 31-31.

Redding players were tired, dog-tired. They dropped to the floor, relaxed and breathed hard.

Woody Harben gasped, "We've got to beat them in the regular playing time. We'll fold if we have to go into another extra period."

The game was on again.

The voices of Hez Rubush and Ab Howell screamed out above all the rest. Every visitor saw the familiar butts of many a Brownsburg jest aroused to fighting pitch. Brownsburg had momentary visions of years of trickery boomeranging upon it at last. But whatever the real or fancied shortcomings of the Brownsburgers, they did not lack courage. Their team fought desperately for what might be the final triumph over Redding in a long time.

For Redding, Harben, Helms and Francisco, who had been in action every minute of both games, were playing on nerve alone.

The scoreboard showed six minutes to play; five; four.

With throats parched, lungs burning and muscles sending out pleas for mercy, they battled on. Brownsburg, in a burst of desperation, still could not shake them.

The score: 36-36, 38-38. Four minutes; three; two; one.

Woody Harben soared high to intercept a pass. He looked for a mate to hook it to. There was none. He feinted a long shot and drew in his guard. Calling upon his last ounce of energy, he reversed and went for the basket in a lightning dribble. He went under, and shot, and collapsed.

The ball rimmed the hoop twice, then sank for two points.

Redding, 40, Brownsburg 38.

And the gun ended the game.

CONNY Goodspeed fought his way through the wildly milling crowd to Coach Lawrence of Brownsburg.

"Lawrence," he said, "in half an hour there will be supper for you and your squad at the 'MILK & HONEY.' And there are rooms for you at the Howell House. You can't go home on a night like this."

Lawrence stared.

"Well, I'll be—"

Conny was gone to join his players in the dressing room. When they came out, they found Kitty and Col. Brewington.

"Conny!" Kitty exclaimed, "what a day! We beat Brownsburg, and we're going to get our highway, too. Did you know Col. Brewington was a member of the State Highway Commission?"

"Sure," grinned Conny, "I'm already booking home games for next winter."

It slowly dawned upon Kitty that maybe Conny's purpose in having Cedar Falls and Col. Brewington present was to let the Colonel see how badly Redding needed a new highway.

Kitty's eyes glowed in admiration and gratitude. She seemed about to fling herself into Conny's arms, right before the Colonel and the basketball squad. Which wasn't exactly the place for such action, even if he was her favorite basketball coach.

But Conny was master of the situation.

"I'm heading for the 'MILK & HONEY,'" he said. "What kind of pie you got?"

Gangway For Glory!



By TED FOX

A Complete College Hardwood Novelet

College-kid snootiness smothered Steve Martin. Grandstanding hoop-lizards looped him into the scrubs. Still, those hardwood racketeers couldn't smash that one-man offense—Steve Martin was the Comeback Kid himself!

THE atmosphere in the Hempstead dressing-room between the halves of the basketball game with Stockton College was tense and expectant. Steve Martin sat on the floor, back propped against the angle formed by two rows of metal lockers. His broad and usually good-natured face was flushed and wet with sweat. He wore a red and blue sweater. Inside the sweater his long, whip-corded body steamed from the violent exertion of bucking through the first half not only the five huskies of the Stockton squad, but the four other members of his own team as well.

Steve looked steadily at his big hands

which clenched and unclenched in his lap between his drawn-up legs. He bit his lip, a dark scowl puckering his mild blue eyes at the corners. Steve's anger was slow to rise but it was reaching the boiling point this night.

Raising his head, he looked around the dressing-room at his team-mates, who were sprawled out on the benches in various positions of rest. They were a tired-looking lot. There was Baldy Jones, the other forward, Bugs Bailey and Hap Taylor, the two guards; Scudder, Todd and the rest of the substitutes, and finally, Glenn Howard.

Steve's gaze came to rest on the lanky

form of the Hempstead center. There was a satisfied look on Howard's smug face that made Steve squirm. There was plenty of reason for that look, Steve thought bitterly. All through the first half of the game, Glenn Howard had done his best to make Steve Martin look like a tramp. And he had almost succeeded.

Steve had fumbled the ball continually. To the crowd of Hempstead students and fans ringing the court it had seemed to be his fault. It was an off night for their star player and they rose on their feet and groaned each time he missed a shot at the basket or lost the ball to an opposing player. Even the Stockton players were surprised. Their coach had hammered it into them continually that Steve Martin was their biggest menace. But he wasn't. Glenn Howard had been the big man of the first half. He was everywhere at once, fighting hard to keep the Stockton score down, despite the all too apparent handicap of having Steve on the floor with him. That was the impression he gave the onlookers. Steve and Baldy and the rest of the team knew different.

They knew that Glenn Howard hated Steve Martin. They knew that Howard was doing his best to drive Steve off the team. His passes to Steve had the unnecessary driving force of a cannon-ball and were just a fraction out of reach or misplaced so that Steve would have to stretch and consequently be off balance for a toss at the basket. Howard would relay the ball at moments when Steve was hemmed in by Stockton players. He was clever about it. He didn't overdo it or make it obvious. Neither did he take any chances of losing the game, letting up on Steve when they fell behind, clamping tightly down again when they led by a safe margin.

As he sat there between the halves, Steve's one wild desire was to get up and beat the tall center's face into a pulp. He deserved that and more, but Steve knew he couldn't do it—not now at least. Jones, Bailey, Taylor and the rest were all Howard's friends. They would say that Steve was trying to put the blame on Howard, that he had done it in a fit of anger at his own failures. No one would believe the truth even if it were told them; and though Steve didn't care what else was said of

him, he would rather go down quietly than be called a bum sport.

Howard's gaze met Steve's. "How do you feel, Martin?" he asked. "You couldn't seem to get going last half. Anything wrong?"

IT was said pleasantly enough. Glenn Howard was always outwardly pleasant to Steve when others were around. The hate the big center felt showed only in his smouldering eyes, the faint sneer on his dark handsome face and the condescending manner of his speech and attitude. This feeling of animosity had popped up at the first day of practice, months ago, and it had grown in intensity ever since. Steve couldn't account for it. He seldom saw Glenn Howard off the basketball court except occasionally at classes. Howard belonged to an entirely different crowd from Steve's. He was the big man around the campus, president of his class and captain of the basketball and football teams. His fraternity was the richest and most sought after in the college. He was popular with the girls, not so much as he thought because of his good looks, as because of his big car and wealthy father who owned most of the town of Hempstead and was head of the huge Howard Lumber Mills. It was old man Howard who had given the gymnasium to the college. Good publicity for the Howard interests, as everyone knew, but the Colosseum was one of the largest in the county and because of its size the conference tournaments were held there, rather than up State.

Steve belonged to no fraternity. Few co-eds looked his way more than once. He wasn't president or captain of anything and his father was a campus janitor and they lived in a little shack across the tracks on the other side of town. That was the only possible reason for Glenn Howard's hating him, Steve thought. Howard wanted Steve's place on the team for "Chic" Scudder, a friend and fellow fraternity brother. With Chic in at guard that would make the clique of five active players from the same fraternity house complete.

But Steve wasn't going to be pushed onto the bench without a fight. He opened his mouth to answer Howard's question,

clenched teeth a white line between parted lips, and at that moment King Davis, their coach strode into the room and slammed the door shut behind him.

Steve slowly relaxed as the thin, gray-haired man walked to the center of the floor and stood there looking down at his charges in stony silence. Steve saw the tightness at the edges of the coach's mouth and with a sudden wave of relief realized that King hadn't been blind to what was going on out on the court during that first half.

King Davis just looked at them for a full thirty seconds, his sharp eyes flitting from face to face, lingering on no one more than another. Finally he threw up his hands in a hopeless gesture.

"I've seen personal grudges carried into politics, prize fights and professional games of all kinds," he half shouted, "but I'd hoped never to see it crop up in a college team of my own, or to such an extent as it did on that court tonight. I'm ashamed of the whole lot of you."

He paused to let his words sink in and Steve squirmed, his face turning a shade redder. All of a sudden Steve felt like teacher's pet, or like a schoolboy who had been saved from the big bully by another instead of winning his battle on his own. And to make matters worse, it was generally known that his father and King Davis were old friends and that the coach had been the one to persuade Steve to come to Hempstead and play basketball.

"I don't know what it's all about," Davis went on without lowering his voice. "And I don't want to know. But this I'm telling you. It's got to stop."

Steve shot a glance at Glenn Howard. The dark-haired center was looking at his feet in a bored fashion. But his head came up with a jerk at King's next words.

"If it doesn't stop," the coach growled angrily, "I'm conceding this game to Stockton and withdrawing you from the Conference for good and all. Remember that. And get this through your heads, every last one of you. I'm not bluffing."

He glanced at his watch then, looking straight at Glenn Howard.

"Now get out there," he snapped, "and if you can, act like men."

As they trotted out onto the court under a battery of lights hanging down from the

steel girders under the roof, tier upon tier of Hempstead students rose up from their seats with a mighty roar. Pennants waved; caps soared into the air; gray-bearded professors yipped and danced like the college boys around them; their wives shouted and yelled with the co-eds dotting the stands in a riot of red and blue colors.

Leaping out onto the court the cheerleader directed the wild tumult into an organized cheer for the team. Scarcely had it died away when across the big Colosseum came a thunderous roar from the Stockton fans as their team filed out on the playing floor. The stands were in a fever of excitement. This was the final game of the Conference. The winner of tonight's tussle would go up against powerful State to decide the championship. The score stood. Stockton, 14; Hempstead, 10.

AS he walked out onto the floor, Steve wondered what course Glenn Howard would follow. Not that King Davis had given him much choice in the matter. But Howard was bull-headed and used to getting his own way in things. Steve wasn't so sure he would give up easily.

Spreading out over the floor the two teams took their positions; guards back, forwards well up and the two opposing centers facing each other with the referee standing beside them, basketball poised in his hand.

The whistle shrilled and the referee tossed the ball into the air. Glenn Howard leaped up a fraction of an inch higher than his Stockton opponent, and tipped the ball aside. Steve caught it on the run and relayed it to Baldy. Baldy took it and side-stepped, seeming to elude a Stockton forward and slamming it back to Steve, who caught it on the fly and all in the same motion looped it into the basket.

A wild cheer burst from the Hempstead side of the Colosseum then faded as the referee brought the ball back onto the floor and put it back into play. The goal was not good. This time the Stockton center reached it first and tipped it to his forward who caught it high and whirling in mid-air, shot it down to his fellow-forward who had run around Steve and was in scoring position. The ball soared up and for a moment as it rimmed the basket looked

like a goal. But a deep groan rose up from the Stockton fans, and it dropped over the outside into play again.

Bugs Bailey caught it and faked a short pass to Hap Taylor. He made two steps on a bounce, then relayed to Jones. Jones ducked a Stockton forward, shot it down the floor to Howard who sank a long one from near the foul line. The score now read, Stockton, 14; Hempstead, 12.

Steve made another field goal a second later but the advantage was quickly lost when the Stockton center sank an easy one from directly under the basket. The fans were up on their feet cheering. With the Stockton rooters calling on their men to hold their lead, and the Hempstead fans entreating their team to score, the Colosseum was in constant pandemonium.

After the first few plays Steve had seen that Glenn Howard intended to play a square game. They had buckled down to business this second half, but despite their desperate efforts, they couldn't seem to close up the two-point gap. Then Stockton scored again and the tally stood at 18-14, with only five minutes to play before the game ended.

Howard tipped the ball to Steve on the next play. Like a flash Steve tossed it back as Howard went around behind his man. Howard dribbled for two steps then shot to Baldy Jones who whirled and hurled it across to Steve. Steve let it go over his head. The ball slapped against the backboard with just the right amount of english on it, and dropped through the ring into the basket.

With a wild yell the Hempstead cheering section leaped to its feet, waving pennants and hats. Two minutes to play. The score 18 to 16, three points to go for victory!

Stockton took the ball next and in a series of quick moves worked it down the floor to the Hempstead basket. But in his eagerness to make a goal, a Stockton forward elbowed Baldy Jones, and the referee's whistle piped shrilly.

The free throw was made from the foul-line and the markers on the score-board were changed to read, Stockton, 18; Hempstead, 17. One minute to play.

Steve's arms and legs ached with weariness. His mouth was dry and every breath he took parched his laboring lungs. He glanced around at his team-mates. They

were no better off than he. They had all played straight through the game, King Davis having made no move to put in substitutes.

Glenn Howard took the ball himself on the next toss. It was almost fatal. He whirled to shoot it at Baldy but the opposing forward was sticking to Jones like glue. A Stockton guard and the center were rushing Howard from two sides at once. He bounced the ball, glanced at Steve, who was racing down the floor covered by a Stockton forward, then passed it back to Bailey. Bailey caught it as he came rushing up, dribbled it to the side-line then hurled it with bullet speed to Steve, who had moved around his opponent and came into the clear to receive the throw. It was a high loop over the heads of the Stockton players. They jumped for it and missed by inches. Steve took it and flipped it up for the basket.

It rolled half way around the rim. Then it dropped through the net to the floor. And at that instant a gun boomed faintly above the roar of triumph that burst from the Hempstead rooters. The game was over.

STEVE pushed his way through the cheering throng that came spilling out of the stands onto the playing floor. In the locker-room King Davis didn't say much. But he gave Steve's arm a squeeze and he grinned when he did it, and Steve felt a little better knowing that the grizzled coach had read the handwriting on the wall. Not a word passed between Howard and himself in the showers and later in the dressing-room. The other players looked at him curiously, then drew off to one end of the room when Glenn Howard was dressing before his locker.

But Steve was used to that sort of treatment by now. In all the time that he had played on the basketball team they had never included him in their conversations. He wasn't their kind. He came from across the tracks, from the mill section of town. And not for a second did they let him forget it. It wasn't so much Bugs Bailey and Jones and Hap Taylor and the rest. They weren't bad fellows individually. But they were Glenn Howard's cronies and his fraternity brothers and Howard was their leader and whenever he cracked the

whip, they would sit up and bark, like so many trained seals.

Steve found his father, old John Martin, huddled against a radiator in the crowded lobby of the gymnasium. "Pop" Martin, the Hempstead students called him. He was a short, seedy-looking man of fifty, gray-haired and shabbily dressed in torn coat and trousers that didn't match. His seamed face was like a piece of old leather. He had watery eyes and a red bulbous nose and a pair of walrus mustaches that drooped tiredly past the corners of his tobacco-stained mouth. He stood there fumbling his soiled cap, a pathetic figure in sharp contrast to the well-dressed students and their families about him.

The old fellow's eyes lighted up at sight of Steve pushing through the crowd toward him. There was a strong bond of affection between these two. In the ten years they had lived alone together—ever since Steve's mother had died—there had never been a harsh word spoken in their little shack down on River Street. Even when his father came home from work drunk, which happened often of late, there was never any scene. Steve simply put him to bed and in the morning asked him not to do it again. And his father always promised to reform, only to repeat the process several nights later.

Steve thought he got the stuff at Kelly's Bar. It was his father's favorite haunt. He drank himself senseless there two or three times a week. Also at Kelly's he made his bets on the Hempstead games.

For that was another weakness of old Pop Martin. Pat Kelly fronted for a syndicate that specialized in taking bets on college athletics. John Martin had bet consistently on Hempstead football, baseball and basketball games now for more than two years and on the average he had come out ahead, enough at least to supply himself with liquor. Steve had done his best to stop it. He had threatened Kelly with the police but the scar-faced saloon-keeper had merely laughed in his face. Enraged at this, Steve had sailed in with both fists flying and had promptly been slugged and thrown into the street by two burly bouncers.

It was only when his father had begun drawing money from their savings account

that Steve objected strenuously. He had finally been forced to change the account into his own name so his parent could not reach it. There were eight hundred dollars there. When he reached twelve hundred they were going to buy a farm out in the county. They had been planning it for years.

Steve pushed through the crowd and put a hand on his father's shoulder. The old fellow had his faults but Steve loved him none the less because of them. John Martin needed someone to look after him constantly. And the job had fallen to Steve.

"What happened out there in the first half?" the elder Martin asked querulously. "You didn't go so good for a while."

Steve glanced over his father's head at Glenn Howard. The lanky center was completely surrounded by a ring of admiring girls and boys from the university.

"Just couldn't seem to get going that's all," he said with a crooked smile. "Nobody's fault but my own."

John Martin grunted. He knew basketball and couldn't be fooled that easily. But he let it pass.

"Let's go home," Steve growled. "No use hanging around here any longer."

They moved toward the door. Steve helped his father into a tattered overcoat, slipped his own leather jacket on over an ill-fitting gray suit. It was bitterly cold out, and they both shivered as they pushed through the swinging doors into the night air.

"Steve, oh, Steve! Wait a minute! I want to talk to you!"

Steve turned and peered back through the frosty panes of glass at a slim, dark-haired girl in a coonskin coat who was waving at him frantically as she elbowed her way across the packed floor of the gymnasium. He held the door open for her.

MARY WOODS was the only girl on the campus so far as Steve was concerned. She was admittedly one of the cutest looking co-eds on the campus and as nice as she was pretty. They were in the same chemistry class and Steve had come to know her well. He was in love with her but that was his secret and he guarded it well.

"Hello, Mr. Martin," Mary said as she came out onto the gym steps. "Heavens,

what a mob. Hello, Steve." She smiled.

That was just like Mary, Steve reflected. She was one of the few students on the campus who showed his father any respect and called him "Mister" instead of "Pop." Steve looked down into the smiling face she turned up to him and his knees suddenly felt like water. She always affected him that way. Every time he heard her husky voice, or looked into her brown eyes, smelled the sweet fragrance of her hair or the perfume she used, he felt a little dazed.

"Steve," she said, putting a hand lightly on his arm. "Won't you take me to the party tonight?"

Steve looked at her uneasily. "What party?" he asked.

"Why, the one they're giving for the team," she said. "You know. Up at the fraternity house."

Steve shook his head. "No, I don't know," he replied slowly. "I hadn't heard about it."

He saw the red flush stealing into her cheeks, the sudden anger glinting in her eyes. He remembered now having heard King Davis telling them after the game that they could sit up a little later than usual tonight if they promised not to break training otherwise. There had been a delay in the tournament schedule and the committee had found it necessary to put the final game off until Monday night. The team had come through a hard season, and King was wise enough to let them ease up.

"Wait here," Mary said, her voice throbbing with rage. "Don't go away, please."

She started to go in, but Steve caught her by the arm. "No," he said. "Don't. I'd rather not go that way."

"Don't be silly," she cried. "Glenn only forgot. I'll be right back."

She was gone before he could stop her. He saw her cross the floor and talk earnestly with Glenn Howard. Steve felt like a fool. But it was nice, he thought, to have Mary interested in him, to have her want him to take her to the party. Then he saw her coming back, Glenn Howard in tow.

"Hello, Pop," the big center called as he swaggered out onto the porch. "How's tricks?" He swung around on Steve before the elder Martin could reply. "Mary says I forgot to ask you to the party tonight. Guess it slipped my mind, but you'd

better come. It's informal, so don't bother to change your clothes."

And with that he spun on his heel and re-entered the gymnasium. Mary stared after him, her small fists clenching at her sides. Steve's own fists were crammed into his pockets where he could control them. Steve knew that it hadn't "slipped" Howard's mind. He had excluded Steve deliberately from the party. And that crack about not bothering to change his clothes. Glenn Howard knew very well that the best Steve had was on his back at that moment.

"I can't understand how some people can be that way," Mary said tonelessly. She turned with a toss of her dark curls and took Steve and his father each by an arm. "But what do we care? The car's out there somewhere. Let's be going."

As they drove away from the gymnasium Steve glanced back and saw Glenn Howard coming down the steps with some of his friends. They were laughing at something he was telling them and Steve guessed what it was.

Mary parked her roadster in front of the fraternity house.

"I've got to make a round of the furnaces," John Martin said as he left them. "Glad to have seen you, Miss Woods. I'll be waitin' in the cellar, Steve. Come down when you get ready to go home."

THE party was well under way when Steve and Mary got there. Steve helped Mary out of her coat and hung it beside his on a peg in the hall. A stair led up from the hallway into the upper stories of the old brick and frame house. Steve glanced into the library to his right and beyond that to the dining-room. Then Mary led him into the sitting-room on the left. It was a huge room, richly furnished with sofas, chairs, rugs and paper on the walls. Steve had never seen such rugs before. They were soft and deep underfoot. Mentally he compared these things with the cold linoleum and the unplastered walls he was accustomed to at home.

Leading Steve to a sofa, Mary sat down beside him. The room was almost full. At one end the rug had been pulled back and an energetic couple were wildly dancing to music pounded out by a bespectacled, chinless youth who sat hunched over a piano

in the corner. On a sideboard were glasses, ice-bucket and a row of bottles. Smoke curled up from a score of cigarettes. The rug was pushed back further and more couples went out on the floor. Then Baldy Jones asked Mary to dance, and Steve was left alone.

Steve wished that he could have been the one to ask her, but he didn't dance well and he hadn't dared. For twenty minutes he sat there on the sofa by himself. No one spoke to him. No one paid him any attention other than to glance at him with a look that plainly said, "What do you think you're doing here?" Steve felt out of place. And he was out of place, he realized, suddenly wishing that he hadn't come.

Steve saw Glenn Howard come in a short while later and take a whiskey bottle and glass from the sideboard. Steve frowned, wondering whether the basketball player was going to break training. Howard disappeared for several minutes, then came back, minus glass and with the bottle half empty. Leaning against the sideboard he looked around the room, his gaze finally settling on Steve. There was a covert smile on his dark, handsome face. He seemed to be amused by something he had done.

Steve saw him leave the room and return twice more in the next fifteen minutes. Then he forgot all about it when Mary came and dropped down beside him on the sofa.

"I must be getting old," she sighed wearily. "I can't keep it up as long as I used to. And I'm glad. I'd much rather be here with you."

That was sweet of her to say that, Steve thought. She wasn't just handing him a line. He loved her more than ever then. But he also knew that he was wasting his time when he thought of them being together for always. She liked him well enough. Beyond that it could never go.

Steve was suddenly aware that a hush had fallen over the room and that Glenn Howard was standing in the center of the floor. The tall center held up his hand for silence. Steve looked at Mary questioningly and she lifted her shoulders in a negative reply.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Howard began in high-pitched nasal tones in fair imita-

tion of a circus barker. "We have a special, extra added attraction here tonight, a dancer who will show us free of charge how the boys and gals down in shanty town strut their stuff." He turned halfway around and motioned to the piano player. "Professor—some music." And as the bespectacled youth struck up a tune, "Let me present to you the one and only—Pop Martin."

The piano player missed a beat, but he went on at an angry sign from Howard. Old John Martin, the janitor, sidled into the room and began shuffling about the floor, clumping his shoes in time to the music. His shoulders were bowed and his hands were clasped behind his back. He was reeling, tottering on his feet. There was a silly vacant grin on his seamed face. He knew he was being made the butt of a joke, but he was too far gone to care.

For a long moment Steve sat in shocked amazement, too stunned to do anything but stare. He could feel the eyes of the whole room bent on him. Mary's hand had closed about his wrist and was clutching it fiercely. He heard her gasp of dismay. Other than the tinkle of the piano and the shuffling of the old janitor's feet on the floor, there wasn't a sound in the room, no cheers, no handclapping. It was an embarrassed silence. The faces turned to Steve were frowning, a number were out and out angry. For once Glenn Howard had gone too far, even here amongst his own friends and cronies.

IN a daze Steve watched his father stumbling about the room on wobbling legs. There hadn't been any smell of alcohol on the old man's breath earlier in the evening. There had been no tell-tale bottle-neck sticking up out of any of his pockets. That he was drunk there was no question. But where had he gotten it?

Like a flash Steve remembered the bottle Glenn Howard had taken from the sideboard. Howard had taken it down to the cellar and given John Martin a number of drinks. With deliberate intention he had struck a blow at Steve by holding Steve's father up to ridicule before this crowd of younger people.

Steve rose slowly to his feet. He knew now where his father had been getting his whiskey. He had been wrong about Pat Kelly. Kelly hadn't sold the old janitor

any. Howard was the one who had been giving it to him. Steve was certain of that. He was certain because he knew that his father didn't leave work here on the campus until eleven o'clock, after he had banked the fraternity house fires. Yet the nights that he had come home drunk he had been in the River Street house by eleven-thirty, just the length of time it took for the trip into town on the bus. He had had his fill then before he ever left the college.

Steve had often wondered about that. Now he knew. As he walked across the floor past his father a blinding rage swept over him and left his muscles taut as a bowstring. He stopped a foot in front of Howard. Glenn Howard was laughing and beating time to the music with his hands. But his grin slowly faded when he saw the fury glazing Steve's eyes. The piano trailed off into silence.

"There's some things money won't teach you, Howard," Steve said very quietly. "Perhaps this will."

So fast that its motion was no more than a blurr, Steve's fist shot up and cracked against Howard's jaw. The sound of knuckles meeting bone was like a pistol shot in the tense stillness. Glenn Howard hit the floor with a crash and lay there writhing.

Steve stood over him, big fists clenched at his sides, his face expressionless. Howard half-rose onto one elbow. His face hand rubbed the side of his jaw as he glared up at Steve in sullen hatred.

"You won't get away with it, Martin," he said in a trembling voice. "I'll get you for this if I die trying."

But he made no move to get up and renew the fight. Steve turned to face the room. No one stepped forward to champion their fallen leader. With a scornful smile twitching the corners of his mouth, Steve took his father by the arm and led him from the house. As they started down the walk toward the street Mary Woods came running down the steps after them. She was pulling on her coat and she had Steve's leather jacket clutched in one hand.

"I'll take you home," she said, avoiding his gaze. "It's late and the buses have all stopped running."

They drove the two miles to town in silence. Steve's face was hard as granite

as he stared straight ahead through the wind-shield. Beside him his father was mumbling and chuckling to himself, head rolling loosely on his shoulders. On his other side Steve could feel Mary's slim body pressed against his. When they pulled up to the curb on River Street, Steve helped his father out, then turned back to Mary. She was leaning across the front seat, one hand on the wheel. Steve put his head in the window to thank her for the lift home.

"I'm sorry, Steve," she said before he could speak. "Everyone that was there tonight is sorry it happened. And I think Glenn is, too. He should be whipped if he isn't."

Steve felt her hand on his cheek, saw her face drawing close to his. A pair of warm lips touched his. Then she was gone and he was left standing on the sidewalk staring after her as the car sped down the street and out of sight.

Dazed, Steve took his father into the house and put him to bed. Then he sat down in his cold bedroom to think over what had happened. It was all a muddle in Steve's brain. He recalled the game with Stockton, and the trouble with Howard, both there and at the fraternity house. That was like a nightmare to him. He closed his eyes then and thought of Mary Wood's kiss, how sweet and tender it had been, and a faint smile softened the harsh lines in his face.

He wasn't fool enough to think that it meant she was in love with him. She had merely felt sorry for him and taken this way of saying it. Steve was grateful. But his mind was made up when he finally went to bed that night.

THE next morning he had a long talk with his father. He told his much subdued and repentant parent of the long downhill struggle he had had at college ever since he had been there. His friendship with Mary was the only thing he didn't discuss.

"I'm not wanted out there," he ended finally. "Hempstead is the finest college in the country but it's too snooty for people like me. I'm resigning."

His father looked at him shrewdly. "You mean quitting, don't you?"

Steve shook his head. "I could stick it

out easily enough," he answered thoughtfully. "But what's the use. I don't like horning in on a gang like that when they've told me as plain as they did that I'm not wanted. I hate people who push in and I'm not going to do it, that's all."

"What about the game?" the elder Martin asked.

Steve smiled. "I'm waiting until after that," he said. "I paid part of a debt I owe last night. As soon as training's over and we've licked State, I'm going to hand over the rest before leaving."

He took a blank check out of his pocket and filled it in.

"There's the whole eight hundred dollars," he said, handing it to his father. "Go see the real estate broker tomorrow and buy that farm you've had your eye on. No need of us living in the city after Tuesday. You can get a mortgage for the balance."

Pop Martin's eyes lighted up as he fingered the slip of paper. "Son," he said tremulously, "it may be the saving of me if we can go away from here. You and I can work hard—start a little orchard, do some truck-farming. Yes, sir, I'll see the broker today."

"And don't spend it on booze," Steve warned his parent seriously, "or lay any money on the game."

John Martin wagged his head vigorously. "I'm off that stuff from now on," he vowed. "You don't have to worry about me, Steve. I won't touch another drop as long as I live."

Steve put a hand affectionately on his father's shoulder. Same old story, he thought, but pretty soon they would be out in the country where the temptation would be removed—where they could start all over. Steve was eager now to get away. The only thing marring his vision of a happy country life was the fact that never again would he see Mary Woods.

Steve spent part of Monday morning in the gym, shooting at the basket, practicing for the big game. He didn't see his father again until late that afternoon. The elder Martin had taken the day off to make arrangements about buying the farm. He was cooking an early supper when Steve got home. He shook his head at the questioning look on Steve's face.

"There'll be a couple of days delay," he

said, "while they fix up the mortgages. It's a clear deed though, so we're all set."

They sat down to their meal. Steve felt a little nervous. He was always that way before a game, but he knew it would disappear the instant the whistle blew for the first play.

Then abruptly, without a bit of warning, the door crashed open and Glenn Howard sprang into the room. Behind him, crowding on his heels, were twenty or more students from the college. Steve recognized the majority as being Howard's friends. But there were some from the other fraternity houses as well, but all of them were the tough, drinking crowd. And there was Bugs Bailey, Jones and Hap Taylor. They carried ropes. Their faces were scowling and grimly cold.

Steve and his father rose to their feet and confronted the group which had drawn up just within the door.

"Well?" Steve asked. "What do you want here?"

Howard's lips curled back in a sneer. "Listen to him," he growled. "You'd think he didn't know a damned thing!"

"Know what?" Steve asked levelly. "Spit it out, Howard. Tell me and then get out of here."

Howard pointed an accusing finger at the elder Martin standing beside Steve. "You know damn' well your old man placed bets on tonight's game."

Steve glanced quickly at his father. Pop Martin was tugging furiously at his mustaches, his eyes downcast.

"Well, what of it," Steve said. "There's no harm in that. Plenty of people do it all the time."

"Sure they do," Howard shot back. "But your father bet on State! He claimed you were going to throw the game so he could make some money!"

"THAT'S a lie!"

John Martin's voice rose to a shriek.

"It isn't," Howard shouted. "A man I know heard you say it this afternoon down at Kelly's."

"I didn't say it."

"Wait a minute," Steve roared. "There's a mistake here somewhere. Go ahead, Dad. Tell them what you know. Tell them you bet on Hempstead, if you bet at all."

The little old janitor seemed to shrivel

up at that and Steve felt a slow freezing around his heart.

"Tell them, Dad," he insisted hoarsely. "Tell them you bet on Hempstead, not State."

John Martin shook his head helplessly. "I can't, Steve. It's true. I did bet on State. Fifty bucks. But . . ."

"That's enough," Glenn Howard shouted him down. "See, fellers, he admits it."

Steve felt as though the bottom had dropped out of everything.

"Let me explain," old Martin was yelling. "I bet on . . ."

"Explain nothing," Baldy Jones growled. "You've said plenty as it is." He turned furiously on Steve. "You cheap trash! You'd throw the game just so your old man could make some dough!"

Steve's head came up with a jerk. There was something queer here, he thought. "Wait a minute," he cried. "I never agreed to throw any game."

"Shut up!" Howard snarled.

"What are we waiting for?" a voice shrilled. "Let's get 'em!"

"The whole college knows about this by now," Howard went on harshly. "King Davis has jerked you from the team, Martin, and the President is going to can you in the morning. But we're not waiting until tomorrow. We're running you out of town tonight—*now*, and if you ever come back we'll tar and feather you and ride you out on a rail."

"No!" John Martin's fist crashed on the table. "You can't do that. Listen to me. Please, listen."

"Too late," Howard yelled, and with that the rush began.

Steve grasped a chair and swung it over his head. Voice shattered with emotion he shouted, "First one of you lays a hand on my father gets his skull split open. We'll go. But you're not running us out. Not now or ever."

The charge faltered, then came on again. Steve's chair swished down and splintered, spilling two of the crowd to the floor. A fist crashed against his jaw. Another slammed into his stomach. He lashed out desperately, felt his knuckles crunch into flesh. Then he was borne back against the wall and pinned there by the sheer weight of his opponents. As he went down, dragged to the floor by a dozen clawing

hands, he caught a glimpse of his father spread-eagled on the table, a thin line of blood running down over his chin from one corner of his mouth.

The sight drove Steve blind with fury. Twisting wildly about the floor he tried to break free. It didn't matter what his father had done. That hadn't changed Steve's feelings any regarding him. But he was powerless to go to the old man's aid. There were three men on his chest, one on each arm and two sprawled across his thrashing legs.

A piece of cloth was stuffed into his mouth and tied in place with a handkerchief. His legs were bound at the ankles and again at the knees and his hands were tied behind his back with cord that cut and chafed the skin on his wrists. Then he was pulled to his feet and propped up against the wall. One glance showed Steve that the same thing had been done to his father. Bound and gagged, they were helpless to defend themselves.

"All right," Glenn Howard said. "You fellows know what to do. Take them out about ten miles on the Pikeville road and dump them. The rest of us have got to get back and get dressed for the game."

He strode across to the door and peered out into the night. "No one in sight," he flung back over his shoulder. "Better get going, you guys. And don't let the cops see you. They might try and stop you."

Steve didn't struggle as he was carried out to several cars pulled up to the curb in front of the house. Roughly they dumped him into one and pushed his father in on top of him. Two of the Hempstead students crowded in beside them, three more sat in front. The remaining dozen scattered for the cars strung out behind. Doors slammed. Starters whirled.

THEN abruptly a long black roadster loomed into sight a block away. Steve recognized its blurred outline and the sound of its powerful exhaust. With a roar it sped down the block toward them. Tires screeching as the brakes were flung on, it pulled across the street blocking the lead car.

Scarcely had it stopped when Mary Woods leaped out and ran toward them.

"Steve!" she cried. "Steve! Where are you?"

Steve shook his head savagely, fighting to spit out his gag. She saw him then in the back seat and running alongside jumped on the running-board as the car began making a U-turn in the middle of the street.

"Wait," Mary cried, pounding on the glass window with one small fist. "It isn't true! Steve, I just heard what they were saying about you and your father. I came as fast as I could. I don't believe it. It's a lie. I know it is."

Leaning forward, straining against his bound hands, Steve saw her white face pressed against the glass. The car was in first gear, moving slowly down the street. Suddenly it stopped and the driver motioned to his two companions beside him to get out. With a nod they went around and pulled Mary off the running-board. Twisting his head as the car leaped forward again, Steve looked back through the rear window. The last glimpse he had of Mary she was struggling furiously in the arms of the two Hempstead students.

Steve felt beaten in spirit as well as in body. Only one thing stood out clearly in his mind, one fact he could never forget. Mary Woods had believed in him.

Few words were spoken when the car finally stopped and they were dragged out onto the deserted country road. A ring of silent students stood about them in the glare of the headlights. Their bonds were cut and the gags removed. Then they were alone and the cars were turning and speeding back to town.

Steve stared after their disappearing tail-lights, his heart like a chunk of lead. He couldn't see his father in the pitch blackness, but he heard the old fellow cursing savagely under his breath. Bending, Steve picked up their coats which one of the students had been thoughtful enough to bring along. It was freezing cold and there was a smell of snow in the air. He slipped on his coat, handed the other to his father. And at that moment the elder Martin's anger bubbled over.

"The crazy, blind fools," he shouted furiously. "If they'd only have listened to what I was trying to tell them instead of shutting me up and putting that dirty rag in my mouth! Sure I bet on State. But I didn't say you were going to throw the game."

He paused to gasp for breath. Then he went on.

"When I placed that bet I winked at Kelly and passed a few remarks about how hard you were goin' to play. Nothing wrong in that but the big crook took it the way I'd hoped he would. I done it on purpose, Steve. That syndicate's as crooked as they make 'em and I didn't have no feeling about stringing 'em along as long as I did it honest. And I did do it honest. All I did was a little hintin'."

Steve groped for his father's arm and seized it. "Go on," he said tensely. "What next?"

"Nuthin', except that naturally the odds went up to 5-1 in favor of State and—and—" he faltered—"you're going to be mad at me, Steve. I bet the whole rest of the eight hundred on Hempstead to win. I did it quiet-like, through a friend."

With a rush the wind whistled out between Steve's clenched teeth. A broad grin spread slowly across his bruised face. Hope and joy swept away the feeling of utter despair that had gripped him a moment before.

"And there goes every cent we have," John Martin growled. "Without you Hempstead hasn't got a prayer of winning."

"They haven't lost yet," Steve cried. "It isn't only the money. That doesn't count so much. It's Mary—she's believed in us—it's you—me—our reputation. We've got to go back to town so I can get in that game. We've got to show them that we're straight and not crooks as they think. Come on."

Clutching his father's arm, Steve started off down the road at a fast walk. It was a dozen miles or more to the college and the game had probably already begun. Their only chance lay in finding a farmhouse and begging a lift into town. A car passed them half an hour later, going the wrong way. Steve shouted at it but the driver kept on going without slackening his pace. Steve groaned. It was getting late and there wasn't a house in sight.

THEN abruptly the head-lights of another car swung around a curve and flooded the road with light. It was going fast, but suddenly it slowed and squealed to a stop a few feet away. There was an

instant's pause. Then Mary Woods ran into the glare toward them.

"Steve!" she gasped, drawing up in front of him, her eyes searching his face entreatingly. "I broke away. I heard them mention the Pikeville road. Now tell me. What happened? What's it all about?"

Taking her by the hand, Steve hustled her into the car. "Quick," he said. "Drive us back to college and step on it."

Mary swung the heavy roadster around and as they raced through the dark for Hempstead, Steve told her the whole story. When he finished she let out a little cry of joy. Steve could have hugged her then but the speedometer read 73 miles and he didn't dare.

"You and Dad get hold of King," he said to Mary as they sped across the campus for the gymnasium, "and tell him the truth. Tell him he's got to let me play. Tell him I want to prove to everyone that I wouldn't throw the game."

The roadster was still in motion when Steve leaped out and ran across the yard and up the stone steps into the gymnasium. To his right as he burst through the door he could hear the sound of muffled cheering from the Colosseum. In the empty dressing-room he tore off his clothes and pulled on his shorts and jersey and laced up his shoes.

King Davis gripped his hand in a vise-like grip when Steve entered the Colosseum.

"Go in there, boy," he growled, "and win this game."

Boos and hisses rose from the Hempstead side of the arena at sight of Steve trotting out onto the playing floor to relieve Chic Scudder. The State team stood at one end of the court, looking at him wonderingly. To have an opposing player hissed by his own fans was something new to them. Glenn Howard strode up to Steve angrily.

"How'd you get here," he snarled. "Get off the floor. We don't want any traitors on our team. It's bad enough as it is."

Steve looked up at the score-board which read, State, 30; Hempstead, 19. His glance shifted to the stands. There was something going on there. He could see Mary holding up her hands for silence. Then his gaze came back to Howard.

"We're going to finish this game," he

said coldly. "After that, Howard, I'm going to push your face in."

A whistle shrilled and Glenn Howard turned away. Steve took his position. They were seven points behind, and there was only ten minutes left to play that. State team was tough. It looked pretty hopeless at that moment.

Again the whistle shrilled and the two centers leaped high into the air. Glenn Howard's finger-tips touched the ball first and with a flip he tipped it back into Steve's outstretched hands. Relaying to Jones, Steve eluded the man covering him in time to take the ball from Jones as it came hurtling across the court, waist high. One dribble brought him under the basket and without slowing up he let it go over his head. A scattered cheer from the crowd told him he had tallied.

Steve made eight points in the first five minutes of play. It was hard work but he was fresh and deadly serious, and he went through the big State five like a cyclone. He was all over the court, dribbling, passing, heaving the ball into the basket from every conceivable angle. His play was contagious. The tired Hempstead team rallied and gave him the support he needed. Even Glenn Howard seemed to come alive and forget his personal grudge in the mad fight to win the game.

Steve took the ball away from a State guard, snapped it to Bailey who relayed to Jones. Jones was in a mess the next second. He was standing in the center of the court, State men all about him. There was only one thing for him to do. Steve was covered. So was Howard. He shot for a goal.

He was off balance when he let the ball go. Steve tried to intercept it but he was a fraction of a second too late. A State guard picked it out of the air and shot it down the floor to a teammate who looped it into the Hempstead basket for two more points.

State, 32; Hempstead, 27." And three minutes to play!

STEVE was fighting desperately for those three remaining baskets. But the State team had tightened its defense and was struggling just as hard to hold its advantage. Steve sank a long one from the sideline. As the ref tossed the ball to State

for the throw-in, he wiped the sweat from his eyes and glanced up at the stands. Mary had done a good job. She had told the Hempstead rooters what had actually happened and the crowd had passed the story up and back to the ones behind. Like a flood of oil tossed on angry seas, the news swept through the stands. Even as he took the defense and waited for the referee's whistle, a sudden deafening cheer shook the arena. Again and again it came, swelling, roaring, shaking the very walls. And the name they were shouting was . . .

"Steve Martin! Five more points, Steve! Go to it, boy! You can get 'em!"

The sound of that cheering put new strength into Steve. Even if Howard and the rest of the team weren't for him, he thought, Mary and the fans and King Davis certainly were. He made two points in the next thirty seconds of play, taking the ball out of the State forwards hands and dribbling the length of the floor for a basket. One more was added when a foul was called on a State forward for elbowing Glenn Howard. Howard sank the free throw and the score stood 32-32.

Steve knew that an overtime period would be fatal. The State outfit was really fighting now and it might rally and score. He threw everything he had into the next play. When the State offensive tried to pass the ball in, he broke up the attack by snagging a State bounce-pass. He dribbled two steps, relayed to Howard who was in the clear, then cut back into the center of the floor, angling toward the basket. Howard had dribbled to the sideline. He glanced at the basket but it was too great an angle for him to risk a shot. He returned it to Steve. In one swift motion Steve dropped it through the hoop for the winning goal.

Steve didn't hear the final gun. Before he knew what was happening he found himself the center of an excited mob of wildly cheering students. They were beating him on the back and shaking his hands. Steve looked around for Mary, but he couldn't find her anywhere. Finally he broke away and went down to the dressing-room.

Closing the door behind him, Steve

turned to face Glenn Howard who was standing in the middle of the floor, face the color of putty. Behind him, ranged along the wall, were his teammates.

"All right," Steve said, walking slowly toward the waiting center. "Here it comes, Howard."

As he spoke, Steve's first lashed up and out. Glenn Howard staggered back under the force of the blow. He recovered and came in with a rush, arms pumping like pistons, head lowered. Steve backed up and then stepped in close and with short stinging rights and lefts drove Howard back. He flattened him to the floor with a crunching right to the temple.

Howard lay on the concrete floor of the dressing-room. Finally he stirred and sat up. Steve turned to find King Davis beside him.

"I think that about clears the slate," the coach said quietly. "Get up now, Howard, and shake hands with Steve here. You deserved this licking."

Glenn Howard rose painfully to his feet. "I know I did," he admitted grudgingly. "I'm sorry, Martin. I guess I've acted pretty lousy."

Steve smiled and held out his hand. "Forget it," he said. "That's ancient history from now on."

They were all crowding forward then—Taylor, Bailey and the other players. Steve stared dazedly around at the circle of smiling, friendly faces. This sudden reversal of feeling toward him took his breath away. Still in a daze he hurriedly dressed and ran upstairs to the great entrance hall. As he appeared, a wild cheer burst from the throng waiting to see him. Over their tossing heads he spied Mary and his father standing by the radiator at one side of the front door. With a wave of his hand he plunged into the crowd, which opened up a lane to let him pass.

Mary came forward to meet him. Without a pause or a moment's hesitation she flung her arms about his neck and hugged him tight. A yell of delight rose from the crowd when she kissed him. But Steve didn't care. He was too happy at that moment to care about a thing other than the slim, dark-haired girl in his arms.

Basketball—It's a Game Guy's Game!

By HOWARD G. CANN

Head Coach of Basketball
New York University

It takes courage and loyalty and iron legs to score in this speed-burning sport. A Conjure-Man of the Courts tells how the game's played—through strategy and hilarity and heartbreak to hard-won goals.

SPEED'S the stuff in basketball. Of course speed is no good unless it's hitched with straight shooting, but the speed has to be there. Another requisite is staying power. It takes stamina to maintain a hot pace in the desperate last minutes of a game when even the best-conditioned players are running around with their tongues hanging out. It helps, too, to know the opponents' tricks—and be ready to smother 'em.

About that last point, here's one out of the book.

Several years back, New York University was getting steam up to meet Fordham. A city-title tilt, in the Ram gymnasium. We knew it would be a tough one—and it was like money from home when our scout brought in a bit of priceless information. Leary, the Ram floor-star, the scout reported, made a practice of directing the play from back court, seldom charging into scoring territory.

We took advantage of this knowledge of enemy tactics—and played a guard on the



foul line, to pick up all loose players coming through.

It did the trick. Hamstrung the Ram attack. And we were able to outsmart our traditional opponents and win the game.

To get back to speed. A lightning pace, a hammer-and-tongs offense with no let-up—that's basketball as played by colleges this year. The game's a hurricane from whistle to whistle. Fast as the court contests have been, this year they're even faster. There'll be no chance for players, or spectators either, to take a long breath. The step-up is traceable to Rule 8 in the new code, which eliminates most of the center taps and keeps the ball in almost continuous motion. It's razzle-dazzle, non-stop.

Speed is the goading theme of the court wars. Speed is necessary in shooting goals, in passing and retrieving the ball, in moving about the court and even in thinking. There must be no lost motion and a team in order to win must go at a fast clip the full forty minutes.

And so physical fitness is now as never before the factor that a player needs most to be ready to engage in this sport today. It is true that he must have courage, determination, a proper spirit of team loyalty, mental alertness and experience as well, but over and above all that, condition means nine-tenths of the game. With the new collegiate rules it's of paramount importance and it will be demanded more and more as the season progresses. There are no rest periods afforded by center taps as formerly and it's a case of go, go, go!

Just as a chain is as strong as its weakest link so a basketball team is as strong as its individual players. One weak link will prove the chain's undoing and one poorly conditioned player will ruin a team's efficiency. There is no team sport like basket-

ball for demanding so much of its contestants. Successful coaches the world over attest to the absolute necessity of physical fitness over and above other qualifications.

Top-notch condition meant the success of the undefeated New York University court quintet during the 1933-34 season when this team ran through a schedule of sixteen major games without a setback. It is true that they were experienced players and had plenty of college spirit and all that, but I as the coach know that condition, mainly, carried us through the series of triumphs at home and on the road.

That Violet quintet was rated as a second-half team, playing faster and stronger as the minutes clicked away and the going grew heated. Being six or seven points behind at the intermission meant nothing to this outfit and the spectators all along the trail were quick to discover this fact. The tougher the going the harder they played, and through it all I knew that the hours devoted in the early winter at University Heights to condition-

Howard G. Cann, coach of the varsity basketball teams at New York University since 1923, has hung up a record of 154 victories and 67 defeats. In 1933-34 the Violet went undefeated through a schedule of 16 games and a year later bowed but once—to Yale in an overtime contest.

Coach Cann is perhaps the greatest all-around athlete in N. Y. U. history. In 1917 he was forward and captain of the basketball team. In 1919, back from the war, as tackle or fullback he led the football eleven as one of the leading kickers in the East.

At the National A. A. U. basketball championship tournament at Atlanta in 1920, in which he scored 32 field goals to help N. Y. U. win the national crown, he earned the Atlanta *Constitution* trophy as the "greatest basketball player in the world," and he was named All-American forward.

ing these players were paying dividends.

DETERMINATION and courage are equally important attributes for basketball players. A member of any team ought to remind himself at every turn that no matter how hard he has to work at mastering the sport, he'll make of himself a better player. It comes easy to a few but for the vast majority of candidates it means diligent attention to the fundamentals of the sport. As for courage, the contestant needs it more than he does his shoes. There is no place on a court for a "yellow" player and a candidate for any team must realize that the least hesitancy or shrinking from heated combat makes good playing impossible.

A team with five courageous players will

go lots farther along the road to championships and success. A team of true championship caliber always drives harder and faster in the face of hardship and seemingly unsurmountable obstacles. That same New York University five which I mentioned earlier in speaking of condition also possessed unusual courage when playing under stress. I recall the men very well. Sid Gross and Willie Rubenstein were our forwards, Joe Leftt our center, and Captain Jim Lancaster and Hagan Anderson, the guards. They had a real test of courage and determination in the closing game of our schedule with the undefeated College of the City of New York outfit when that old collegiate pitfall, ineligibility, caused us to lose Captain Lancaster for the important tilt. We had an unbroken string of victories to protect and faced an equally brilliant aggregation boasting another exemplary record.

Well, what happened?—did the Violet lose its spirit and grit just because its captain and star was forced to retire without leading the fight in his final college game? On the contrary. The team played superb ball, wore down the opposition minute after minute—and won, playing as fine a game of basketball as seen in Eastern court circles in many long years. I was plenty proud of that outfit.

The mastering of the fundamentals of the game plays an important role in our system at N. Y. U. A team will not fail as quickly and as easily if the players are equipped with a thorough knowledge of the fundamentals of individual and team play. A first-hand acquaintance with the game's fundamental principles will eliminate the possibility of costly error in missing passes, handling the receiving of passes and in shooting.

Along with this there ought to be keenness of thought and experience. A real court star cannot be made in a day, a month, or a year, and you will find that hard work, constant practice and the experience of many hard-fought games are necessary.

I am not a disciple of any complicated system of play. We have certain set formations, especially on jump balls and on outside balls. But we have insisted for years on condition, a thorough training in fundamentals, a love of the sport and the

school, and good fellowship among the teammates.

The good of the team must be the underlying rule rather than the good of the individual in our basketball set-up. I have no time for players who are selfish and who are seeking personal glory at the expense of their mates. Basketball is first and always a team game and must be played as a unit. Occasionally a player strays from the fold, and then a coach has a real educational problem on his hands.

Newspaper publicity does not aid the situation in this instance. College players are youngsters; they enjoy headlines and keep their clippings just as do the All-American gridiron heroes. The papers publish news on individual high-scoring records and often we come across a chap who has his mind more on increasing his own total rather than contributing his fullest ability to the unit as a whole. But this is rare in colleges today. The boys themselves won't tolerate such a situation long and you'll find that sort of individual getting the cold shoulder from his peers. Gradually he will see where he is damaging the united cause and if he has honest convictions you'll see a direct about-face.

One team that's hard to beat is the bacilli squad. No matter how a coach harps on condition and physical fitness, often the team will bog down because a player or two have overtrained or suffered an ailment. An epidemic of flu among one's players can do as much damage as injuries to the bodies by combat. A perfect example of this situation occurred last season at N. Y. U. when we were deprived for several games of the services of "Swede" Terjesen and Milt Schulman, two key men on our attack. Ill and weak, they lost their fire and zip and failed to play up to expectations. Ohio State at Madison Square Garden in an important intersectional contest caught us in this position and overtook the Violet after we had amassed a nine-point lead at the intermission. Our replacements lacked experience. With the handicap of playing a pair of weakened players we fell behind—and the Big Ten quintet returned West with a victory.

BUT if courage can't beat the bugs, it can go down with flags flying—and rise to fight again. Here's a story. Wash-

ington and Lee University produced the outstanding basketball team in the Southern Conference in 1936-37. Paced by Big Bob Spessard, a six-foot-seven center, who averaged around twenty points a game, the Generals made it hard going for every team on the schedule. A fast forward, Bill Borries, brother of Navy's Buzz, scored many points. The W. and L. team visited New York's Madison Square Garden to meet a crack Long Island University quintet.

The Generals played against the Blackbirds without the services of Spessard, who was taken down with the flu. Borries was also weakened by sickness but he saw action in the game. He put up a game fight but he was unable to carry the burden of the attack. He was so weak that he could hardly lift his arms and it was a real struggle for him to get around on the court. At first the fans did not realize that Borries was ill and his efforts to retrieve loose balls and shoot goals were booed and laughed at. Then an announcement informed them of his condition. They saw what courage and determination he was displaying in every action, and their belated cheers rang out loud and long. His playing that night won an outstanding award of merit in the heart of every lover of sportsmanship.

Later, in the Conference finals, Washington and Lee with Spessard and Borries back in condition turned in a stellar all-around exhibition. Spessard scored twenty-five points single-handed!—and Borries shone like his twin star.

It takes a thoroughbred to be a real high-class basketball player with all the crack teams in the collegiate circuit. A thoroughbred never knows defeat, he never quits, and when all in and seemingly ready to drop he recalls that his opponent is probably a little worse off than he is and the will power that is in his heart and body forces him on. Hagan Anderson and Willie Rubenstein of recent Violet teams were perfect examples of thoroughbreds. These boys did not know the meaning of quitting, and their climb to the heights of stardom in major college circles was closely coupled with courage and grit.

Scouting of rivals has become almost as prevalent in the court rivalries as on the gridiron. When we look over the oppo-

nents' games we watch for defects in their style of play and peculiar characteristics of the players. We model our attack and defense accordingly. This did the trick. We were able to outsmart our traditional rivals and win the contest. Often opposing players tip off their formations to scouts by body movements and facial expressions. These little points are important to scouts and coaches, and correct interpretation of a short shift or a quick wink may mean winning the game.

Last season Middle West and Pacific Coast teams visited Eastern courts and left considerable damage behind in the way of startling upsets and one-sided victories. Students often ask me if I have any theories concerning the superiority of players from those sections of the country over our urban university teams. The way I see it is that the high school and college boys in the big cities of the Atlantic seaboard are not active enough in their daily routine. I am particularly saddened by evidence that good sturdy legs are fast disappearing here in the East. The boys from the country colleges, the Big Ten and West Coast in particular, are better suited physically for athletics by their modes of living. They spend more time in the outdoors and walk farther and oftener. City life has softened the Eastern college boy and he takes the easy way around, be it an errand for the folks at the store or even a trip downtown himself. He'll ride before he will think of walking the distance. I may be wrong in this point but experiences in the recent campaign seem to bear me out.

Indiana, Ohio State, Notre Dame, and Stanford are four teams that come to my mind in this regard. Last season these institutions of learning and legs put teams of six-footers on the court and all four outfits outran the New York City representatives dizzy. If Eastern colleges hope to cope with this situation they must develop teams with plenty of legs, and good fast ones in the bargain.

The training season—or lack of it—can give a coach and his college plenty of worry. Basketball normally is a winter game, but some colleges begin their preparations with the opening of the fall semester. I have even introduced spring duels for my squad. Considerable work is spent on brushing up on fundamentals

and in developing of speed among our candidates. In a few cases coaches are forced to await the end of the football season in order to get some of their material. As a rule it takes a football man two or three weeks to get used to the court routine and it has been my experience that no football man was ever able to last more than six minutes when the going got tough in a speedy basketball game. The pace generally has been too fast and is a great contrast over the gridiron sport.

BASKETBALL has its startling happenings like any other sport. Many of these incidents have added to a coach's gray hair. One of the most unusual—and one of the most hilarious—I have had the occasion to observe concerned a game between the New York University and Rutgers University freshmen at New Brunswick, N. J., a few years ago. The game was played preliminary to the intersVarsity contest and a large crowd of Violet rooters were present in the stands to watch the two games. We had a youngster on our frosh team named Roy Bowles, who was generally a clear-thinking lad. In this game Bowles received the opening tap. He dribbled the entire length of the court and sank a beautiful shot. As the ball dropped through the net he immediately turned on his teammates and bawled them out unmercifully.

"Why didn't you fellows help me take her down?" he demanded spiritedly.

They gave him a cold eye—and he gasped in surprise and chagrin when they told him that he had scored his goal in the opponents' basket. As the game was resumed, the incident was overlooked; the tally did not appear important. But at the end those two points proved to be the margin of victory for the Rutgers frosh over the Violet cubs.

Once we were playing at the Naval Academy at Annapolis in the armory, which had a floor covered with battleship linoleum. They had a bad storm down there and water dripped through the roof and formed pools on the court. An attempt was made to dry the court, and rosin was applied to the bad spots, but it was still like trying to run on ice. The court was so slippery that the players of both teams took numerous falls. After five minutes

of the contest and with the score tied at 8-all, we decided to move the game to the gymnasium. Then started a long hike through the underground passageways connecting the Academy buildings. By the time play was resumed in the gym, the New York players had lost their edge and the midshipmen went ahead to win. My men were unable to get back their usual poise in the new surroundings. But they came home with the satisfaction of making history that day—playing one game on two courts a mile apart.

A blizzard almost cost us another game with Lafayette College at Easton, Pa., one season. Our train arrived fifteen minutes after the starting of the game and we were forced to pile into cabs and cars to travel through the drifts out to the Maroon campus. Our reserves were ready first, and I sent them in to start the game. Thrilled with the idea of being in the opening lineup, the subs put on a scoring spree and left the game after fifteen minutes of play with a ten-point lead. The varsity was sent in at this stage—but the lead dropped off, and we were lucky to win the game after an extra period by a single point. The regulars certainly were jittery and unassembled and gave us more heart throbs than did the idea of a blizzard.

At Madison Square Garden, where we have played our big games for the past four years, they have installed glass backboards to improve the view of the spectators seated at the ends of the court. We followed suit at our campus gymnasium and there too they have proved convenient to the fans. They also give our boys the practice they need for the Garden games. It takes a player a little time to judge his distance with these new baskets because it's mightily distracting to see through them. After a while he becomes unconscious of the fact that they are transparent.

One afternoon at University Heights before the basketball team had started its practice session, an overambitious shot-put candidate decided to get in a workout and took an extra good heave of the shot. It sailed skywards and shattered one of the glass backboards into a million pieces. The special glass was manufactured in Pittsburgh where at the time of the mishap the buildings were under about eight feet of flood water and factories were giving little

thought to anything like work. We had to do without.

We drilled the rest of the week with only one basket. I was really tempted to persuade the shotputter to do a job on one of the Garden backboards so that we would feel right at home down there. However he took his iron shot outdoors after that and failed to attend subsequent court workouts.

Startling and amusing incidents cross the paths of coaches and teams. We all consider some of them downright serious at the time but in later years when we look back over these happenings we can't fail to smile a bit. And be thankful for them. The average training routine is nerve-tightening enough anyway at times, and a good laugh is often worth losing a goal or two.

The court clown, while not always an unmitigated blessing, can contribute his share to release training-tautened nerves. I have kept many an awkward, gangling youngster on the squad because of his keen wit or clowning ability. A team trained to staleness is apt to break apart in the middle of the season, and the jester has his part as well as the fast-breaking star forward in putting a team up there in the championship rankings and keeping it there.

BASKETBALL has added many attractive trimmings. The game is far different than the one originated by Dr. James Naismith in 1892 at Springfield. The original rules—thirteen in number—called for a couple of baskets or boxes about fifteen inches diameter across the opening and about fifteen inches deep suspended one at each end of the grounds or court about ten feet from the floor. The number composing a team depended upon the size of the court area but it was permissible to have from three on a side to forty.

Today fifteen rules with many subdi-

visions and added notes covering fifteen printed pages control the sport and the rules specify definitely that the "game of basketball is played by two teams of five men each. . . ."

But outside of these structural changes in the conduct of the sport there are changes in the uniforms of the players, the size and type of gymnasiums, the introduction of various systems of coaching, special types of flooring, glass backboards, a new ball, boards of approved officials, committees of regulation and each season an attempt to codify the sectional interpretation of the rules.

Today thousands play the sport in every corner of the world. College, club and military organizations have carried the sport to distant lands and the game earned international recognition with its inclusion on recent Olympic Games programs in Berlin.

Schools and colleges, clubs and business organizations that are unable to field football and baseball teams experience little difficulty in developing interest in basketball.

And thousands upon thousands are sitting in attendance at basketball games today. Midwest and Eastern college games have attracted anywhere up to 18,000 for a single game in recent seasons. Last winter 150,000 attended the twelve nights of double-header basketball arranged at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

The sport has made great strides. It is up to the coaches and players to keep abreast of the changes. It is fatal for a coach or team to remain behind the times in regard to styles of play and systems. The youngsters who make up our squads demand the best type of instruction and coaching, and we coaches have a real duty to perform in seeing that this is available at all times. We hope to do our duty—to a grand sport and the fine lads who follow it.



Razzle-Dazzle Racketeer

By WILLIAM R. COX

Those razzle-dazzle Denver hoopsters were sure-fire bets to cop the Conference crown—'til Coach Tip Colson sold 'em down the river to make a gambler's holiday!

A Novelet of the Hardwood Court

ANDY DERRICK groaned, "There they go."

The Tate center pivoted and passed to a running guard. The guard stopped dead in his tracks. A Tate player put a block on Jerry Depew and Sam Pavelli was

picked off by the center. The Tate guard passed swiftly to Elmer Madden, "Give it to Elmer," of national fame. The great Tate forward dropped the ball through the hoop with great nonchalance.

Andy said, "That's 18 to 16 against with

two minutes to go. If we can only break loose with that number 44 play. . . ."

Tip Colson said, "Tate is too good."

They were scrambling for the ball. The referee gave Danver an out down in Tate territory. Jerry Depew passed it to Abe Skivak and ran swiftly around his guard. Abe bounced to Pavelli who dribbled, pivoted and shot the ball back to Depew. The Tate team gathered down below the black line.

Depew faced the five-man defense and hesitated. A Tate guard came out and towered over him, arms waving. Jerry passed desperately back to Gil Mandeville. Tate maintained its solid defense, and the gun barked, ending the contest. Danver rooters were dismally silent in the big gym.

Tip Colson said, "Well, we held them to the narrowest margin of any team this season. You can't beat a team with Elmer Madden in there."

Andy Derrick heaved his stocky frame off the bench and said bitterly, "So he'll be back next year. And good old Addison Ashley tells me next year is our last chance."

Tip Colson said in his lordly manner, "I'll think of something. We'll come through, Andy. Count on it. I never admit failure."

"You just had one," pointed out Andy disgustedly.

He plowed through the milling crowd and left the building. He knew that Tip Colson would go in and soft-soap the boys and dish it out to Director of Athletics Ashley. That was Tip's specialty.

Andy Derrick was assistant to Colson at basketball, assistant to the baseball coach and general handy man of sports at Danver University. He was a compact young man of medium height who had been a thoroughly competent athlete in his day. He had shoulders of unusual breadth and long arms which swung loose when he walked. He was mild-mannered and blonde and his round face wore an eternal expression of surprised interest.

HE went into the Coffee Cup and found Annabelle Ransom waiting patiently. He wished that Annabelle had graduated so that he could take her down to Trotter's for a beer. It was comfort-

able in Trotter's. The beer joints in bounds for Danver co-eds were littered with students. Andy felt old and out of place among students. He was twenty-eight.

Annabelle had blue eyes which were sometimes black. Her lashes were long and curly. Her hair was brown and unbobbed. She wore disturbing sweaters and short, pleated skirts and sensible shoes. Her speech was pert and colloquial but Andy often had the disturbing suspicion that she was far cleverer than he. She was a senior at Danver.

She said, "Hiya, old man dolorous. I see by your expression that I didn't miss anything."

"They did it to us," he admitted. "They played us for a lead and then held us in. When we were ahead we couldn't stall."

"Tip Colson again," said Annabelle. "The great Colson and his magnificent gestures. Gamble and win, says Colson. Fight, fight, fight, boys and victory will surely be ours."

"Aw—Tip's all right. He has good teams. He's a spell-binder, but it works most of the time."

"Oh, yes. Tip's lovely," said she. "And you've got next season to make good and then you'll be sent to good old Siwash while I stay here at Danver working in the lab. and doing my p.g. And you'll meet some little blonde with big eyes and no brains and marry her."

"That's an idea," said Andy. "One that won't be heckling me all the time."

"And you'll be assistant to someone all your life. You're a better coach than any of them but you'll always be the heel," said Annabelle.

"Aw—I'm no orator," growled Andy. "I give 'em the plays and let 'em go. The kids don't want that stuff these days."

"But it impresses the powers that be," said Annabelle sweetly. "Witness your pal Tip."

"Tip's all right," repeated Andy stubbornly.

Annabelle dug into a chocolate fudge sundae with whipped cream and maple walnuts and said, "Well, you big tramp, I hope you miss me when you're gone. Because the skids are certainly greased for you and Tip."

"I don't know if I'll miss you or not,"

said Andy. "You eat many of those things and you'll lose your shape."

Tip Colson came in and stalked across the room to the booth in which they sat. His curly black hair glinted in the lights. His square jaw jutted and his sports ensemble fitted him like the paper on the wall. Tip always looked like something right out of Esquire.

"Annabelle, you're beautiful," he said sinking into the seat opposite her.

"I wish Andy could think up original things like that," said Annabelle demurely. Andy glowered at her, but Tip seemed oblivious of the irony.

He said, "I've just been figuring it out, Andy. We lose Camp and Fried and Wilson. That leaves us Jerry Depew, Skivak, Pavelli, Mandeville and Levin for the first squad. They're pretty good. But they can't beat Tate. Now what we need is one man, a star about whom we can build an offense. We gotta score and score and keep on scoring to beat Tate. We must have a man to offset Elmer Madden."

"You got something there, Tip," said Andy. "Where we gonna get him?"

"We will have to develop him. We will have to find someone and go to work on him. It won't be easy, Andy. But we must do it. Or lose our jobs," he added anti-climactically.

"Well," said Annabelle sweetly, "all these boys have two arms and two legs. Why shouldn't one be as good as another. Good coaching should certainly be the answer."

"Nuts," said Andy. "When we get 'em they either are or they ain't. We can polish 'em, but that's about all."

"Fine polish you'd give a boy," retorted Annabelle. "You'd be more likely to scratch."

Tip said, "I wish you could play, sweetheart. You'd at least look good out there in a suit. Look, I got to see a man about a pony. See you later."

He gave them his best smile and sauntered out, not appearing to hurry, but moving rapidly. His tall, graceful figure passed through the door.

ANNABELLE said, "You think he was kidding about that horse business? I saw him with Little Davey again yesterday."

"Yeah. Tip even thinks he can beat the ponies," said Andy worriedly. "He never concedes defeat. That's fine stuff when you're competing. But it's no good for coaches. You have to look ahead."

"My fine-feathered friend, you are indubitably correct," said Annabelle. "And now I will go home and sleep and you will go down to the abominable Trotter's and get full of beer. See me tomorrow, will you?"

"Probably," said Andy. "I generally do."

He watched her trim figure swing out of the shop and sighed gustily. He paid the check and wandered down toward Trotter's. He had a sickening premonition of impending calamity. Beer, he thought, might dispel it.

Little Davey Corbin was at the bar. He was a dapper man dressed in the fashion which ten years ago was termed "collegiate." He had for a couple of years made a good living gambling with and for Danver students. So far the authorities had been unable to do anything about him due to the fact that he seemed honest in his dealings.

He moved close to Andy and said, "Have one on me, kid. Tough luck tonight."

"Yeah," said Andy. "That Madden was too good."

They sipped at the amber liquid. Little Davey said, "I know a kid can play basketball about as good as that Madden guy."

"You wouldn't kid a fella, would you?" said Andy.

"He played over at Harpendale High a couple years back," said the gambler. "Didn't have any dough so he went back to the farm. Lives with his mom out on Route 9. Sells eggs for a livin'. I hear he come into some dough lately, though. Maybe he'd be interested in comin' to school here."

"What is this, Davy, a frame?" said Andy suspiciously. "If you're trying something on me. . . ."

The gambler looked injured. He said, "Look, I'm loyal to Danver, ain't I? I got a good lay here. Why should I phony up on you? I'm givin' you a steer. This Cantwell kid is good. I seen him play with a church team."

"So even the church teams bet," said Andy. "Well, what's the catch?"

"I hear Tate's after him," said Davey. "They give plenty scholarships over there. With him an' Madden they'd be in line for the Olympics in a couple of years."

"What's in this for you, Davey?" said Andy.

The gambler finished his beer. He said, "Route 9, near Harpendale. You can take it or leave it, Andy. I'd like to see Danver get a break. It won't make me or finish me either way. You'll like this kid. He's your kind. Quiet, y' know. Serious. You better see him."

TIP COLSON and Andy shared a couple of rooms just off the campus. The next morning Andy said, "Dave Corbin gave me a lead on a basketball star last night. You know Corbin pretty well. What do you think?"

Tip yawned and stretched. He said, "Davey knows his sports. But it's probably another bum steer. Why don't you check on it?"

"You're the schmoozler," said Andy. "You better try it."

"Naw. I'm sick of runnin' around after schoolboy wonders. You go ahead, Andy. We got one scholarship to give out. If he looks all right offer it to him."

Andy got out his small coupé. It was a cold day in the country. He drove over frigid roads to a small farmhouse on Route 9. There was a rural free delivery box which bore the name "Cantwell." Andy went in and knocked on the door.

A pleasant-faced woman smiled at him when the door opened. Andy grinned back and said, "I'm looking for young Cantwell."

"Charlie? He's inside studying," said the woman. "Come right in, sir."

Andy went in and said, "I'm Andy Derrick from Danver University."

A red-haired youth came into the room and said, "I've seen you at games, Mr. Derrick. How are you?"

He was indeed similar to himself, Andy saw. He had the same breadth of shoulder, the same length of arm. He even had the same hesitancy of manner and his smile was an amiable reflection of his mother's. Andy liked him at once. He said,

"I hear you're quite a basketball player, Cantwell."

"People call me Eggs," grinned Cantwell. "Yes, I'm all right, I guess. I mean—well, I was high scorer every year I played."

"Well, we have a scholarship open at Danver," said Andy. He chose his words carefully. "Of course you'd have to pass stiff entrance requirements. And we can't give you much. Just a room and tuition and a job. We don't have any of those things where you jump over a matchstick and collect bets. But we have a good school, nice bunch of boys and a pretty good basketball team. If you can make the grade we'd like to have you."

"I always wanted to go to Danver," said young Cantwell. "I'd—if I could make the grade I'd like to. I've been studying, figuring to enter the sophomore class if I got a chance to go to college. And I'm in good shape for basketball."

"I'll put your name in," said Andy. "Don't listen to anyone else, now will you?"

"You mean from other schools? I wouldn't pass up Danver for Oxford and Cambridge," laughed the youngster. "Why, I've been rooting for Danver teams all my life. Mr. Derrick, it'll be a dream come true when I actually get there."

THERE was a vague doubt in Andy's mind as he drove back to the college. It had all been too easy. The Cantwell boy had been too willing, too assured. He remembered Tip Colson's words, "Another bum steer." He remembered that the original steer had been from a professional gambler. He wondered uneasily how well Little Davey Corbin knew Cantwell and if there was the chance of any shady connection between them. The youth had acted almost as if he expected a visit from a Danver coach.

He thought of the slow smile and candid eyes of the red-headed youth and felt easier. The open-faced son of an amiable and pleasant mother, he reasoned, could not be allied with Little Davey. He drove along swiftly. He was late for a date with Annabelle.

He picked her up in front of the library. Her nose was red from waiting in the wind. He said,

"I'm sorry, baby. I was out getting me a basketball player for next year."

He related the circumstances to her. Annabelle said,

"Little Davey playing Santa Claus? He's miscast in that role if you ask me, which you don't of course."

"Well, maybe he figures on cleaning up on the team next year," said Andy. "With one real star we'll have a championship combination."

"Little Davey is a professional gambler," said Annabelle. "His bets are sure things. He makes book, mostly. If he's planning to bet on Danver, one basketball player will have to be awful good to make his bets sure things."

"You're a suspicious babe," complained Andy. "I'll bet you think the Spanish War is a frame-up. Sometimes I have my doubts about marrying you. You'll never believe I was out with the boys."

"And I'll probably be right," said Annabelle. "And as for marrying and giving in marriage, if this Eggs boy isn't as good as you say, there won't be any. I don't believe in absentee husbands. And I won't do my post graduate at Siwash, or wherever you wind up as assistant coach."

"There you go again," said Andy. "Be-littlin' your future husband. A girl ought to have more self-respect."

"A man ought to have more push," said Annabelle sententiously. "Show me something to respect, wolf."

Andy turned the car abruptly up a country lane and parked out of sight of the road. Five minutes later the girl said breathlessly, "Well, that's something. But it's not what I meant."

"It'll do for now," said Andy grimly. "Straighten your hat."

EGGs CANTWELL made the grade scholastically and morally and the scholarship was his. In fifteen minutes on the floor of the gym he proved to Tip Colson and Andy Derrick that he could earn it.

His handling of the ball, his passing, his footwork were a revelation. His endurance proved to be remarkable. They had him shoot from every angle and every distance, on the run, off balance and set. He never missed.

Tip Colson said, "If he lives through the summer our jobs are good for another year at least. He's as good as Madden.

All we have to do is build the rest around him and keep attacking. We can't miss."

"If you'd mix a good defense with that you'd have something," said Andy sourly.

"The best defense is a good offense," quoted Tip. "You gotta gamble to win, Andy."

"So you say," said Andy. "How you doin' on those bang-tails? Seems to me Little Davey is gettin' plenty of your dough."

"What do you know about that?" said Tip sharply. "That's none of your business."

"Okay, toots," said Andy surprisingly. "I was only kiddin'. Don't get sore."

Colson recovered himself immediately. He made a sweeping gesture of disdain and said, "Oh, I'm out a little. But I'll come back. Don't worry about me, slow poke. You better gather some hay if you're going to marry the sweet Annabelle. You can't live on love."

"Yeah," said Andy. "I know it. But my job's all right. I just want to keep it. This team has got to be good enough to get that Conference championship."

"It's in the bag, Andy. In the bag," said Tip off-handedly. "Now that we've discovered Eggs Cantwell."

SUMMER came and went so swiftly that Andy barely had time to miss Annabelle. She came back brown and healthy and bluer-eyed than ever. Andy was almost sentimental at the train when he met her. She said,

"Take it easy, wolf. You look as if you loved me or something. People will stare."

He said, "Will you please get into my car and hurry up about it? I can't be kissin' you out here. It looks lousy."

"And unethical," said Annabelle. "Okay, wolf. Heave-ho, and heaven help the make-up."

After awhile she said, "How's basketball?"

"Football's got a couple of them, but the rest are workin' out pretty regular," he said. "We're not wastin' any time. Tip's got them going good together. Cantwell is the works."

"He's good, eh?" she said.

"He's our basketball team," said Andy. "So much so that I don't like it. But there you are. I been coachin' Skivak and

Depew on the side a bit. Just in case Eggs breaks his shell or something."

"Smart Andy," said Annabelle. "You'll get by. With a push from me."

THE football season waned as the days grew shorter. Jerry Depew and Joe Corvil came back unhurt and were fitted into the basketball picture. Depew and Cantwell were the regular forwards. Sam Pavelli copped the center post and Gil Mandeville and Sol Levin were first string guards. Joe Corvil, Piggy Betts, Orvie Littleton and a couple of other boys remained as capable spares.

Colson's flashy, swift-passing floor-system and his gambling, brilliant breaks for the basket were clicking perfectly with Eggs Cantwell at the spearhead of the attack. Tip even allowed Andy to introduce his favorite figure 8 maneuver, a slow breaking, whirligig revolvment which was certain to produce scores if given the time. The school watched a couple of practise games and went basketball goofy.

They opened the Conference chase away, playing Haughton College. Tip sent them on the floor with instructions to pile score upon score as fast as they could, to make the total as great as they could. When Andy objected that it wasn't necessary to show up a rival coach, Tip said.

"This is a championship team and I want them to know it. Gives 'em confidence."

Sam Pavelli got the jump and tapped to Gil Mandeville. Eggs Cantwell broke around his guard with a burst of speed and a double pass wound up in his capable hands. He scored from the sideline in ten seconds.

The rest of the game was just like that. Haughton followed Eggs around all night in hapless fashion and Eggs alternated with Jerry Depew in dropping the apple through the hoop. The final count was Danver 62, Haughton 8.

Tip said, "There's your defense for you. How can they count when we're busy dropping them in?"

Andy forebore to point out that Haughton was not Tate.

coming up Danver had been undefeated. Andy thought that they had also been untested. He worked quietly with Abe Skivak when no one was watching. He was afraid something would happen to Cantwell. The thought haunted him night and day.

Annabelle said, "You ought to move in with that kid and watch him night and day. He might fall and stub his toe or something."

"If he does," said Andy, "you can put that hope chest in the attic for awhile."

The night before the game he was in Trotter's for his beer. Little Davey said to him,

"Well, I guess you ain't quite ready for Tate yet, huh Andy?"

"Who says so?" said Andy sharply.

"Well, no one," said Corbin. "But those guys are awful good. They got experience on you. I figure they'll take this one and you'll catch 'em next time. Then you can play 'em off an' cop."

"For the gate, eh Davey? What do you think this is, the fight game? We'll take 'em now and later, too, if Eggs stands up," said Andy. "Don't think anything different."

Before they went to the train to make the trip to Tateville, Tip Colson said carelessly, "Well, we might blow this one, but we'll get them later."

Andy said nothing for the moment. As they were about to board the train he remarked casually, "I wonder how the betting is? Any odds?"

Even money," said Tip absently.

"Yeah? How much you got down?" asked Andy.

"Not much. I mean—nothing. I don't bet on my teams," said Tip severely. "You know that, Andy."

"Yeah. I just thought maybe you'd changed your style," said Andy.

He got on the train and found a seat next to Eggs Cantwell. In the back of his mind there was a thought that if the train was wrecked he might somehow be able to save his meal ticket.

THE Tate five were certainly of different caliber than the other teams of the Conference. Class was written all over their stalwart frames. Not a man was under six feet. Crimp Magee and Elmer Madden were two inches over that

AS the season wore on it appeared that Tip was right. At the end of the first half of the round with the first Tate game

height. Chink Latzo was four inches higher. The guards, Kamp, and Morrie Fortune, were shorter and huskier than the forwards, but fully as quick and durable. They were champions, with the demeanor of champions.

Latzo got the initial jump, as usual. He tapped back toward guard, but Crimp Magee took the ball after a short sprint. The guard switched, running down court. Pavelli followed, Gil Mandeville covering Latzo.

"Give it to Elmer" Madden broke quickly and circled under the basket going clean across court. Sol Levin followed closely but could not get in front. Kamp was down to the right.

Magee shot the ball to Fortune, whirled and put a block on Depew. Eggs Cantwell diagnosed the play and broke into the alley, but Fortune passed to Latzo and the giant center raised the ball over his head and slapped a long one against the backboard. Madden leaped high for the rebound and dropped it in.

"Early cut by Madden, late cut by Kamp," growled Andy. "The circle down under the basket by Madden leads our guard in and sets up Latzo's carom. Simple stuff."

"They use it a lot," said Tip. "We'll stop it before next game."

"Why not tell 'eh how to block it at the half?" said Andy. "We can take these guys."

"Let the boys go," said Tip. "They'll learn the Tate style tonight. That'll be all right."

Andy pondered. Tip Colson, the gambler, they always win, fight-to-the-bitter-ender was out of character. He watched Eggs Cantwell.

The red-headed youth was far from stampeded by the big Tate machine. He was moving into the intricate pattern of their play, boldly breaking up passes, spoiling shots, harrying the guards and hurrying the forwards. Fritz Kamp, a great guard, was hard put to it to hold him in check.

Eggs was counting, too. Time after time set plays from an out or offensives from the foul line were smashed by his quick-thinking speed. The Denver team rallied around him nobly. At the period the score was tied at eight all.

AT the half it was Tate 15, Denver 14. The squad seemed fresh and strong in the dressing-room. Andy listened while the silver-tongued Tip dished out the gravy.

"You've done splendidly. I never had a team half so smooth, so strong," Tip was saying. "You are fighting a championship team and fighting them to a stand-still. I'm proud of you, boys."

He did not give them the block on the center jump play. He went on and on, telling them to fight and lauding them for their ability to hold Tate even.

Andy moved among them quietly, explaining to each that Madden must be checked or forestalled on his circle under the basket, that they must switch men and take Kamp out of the play and that someone must be set for Latzo's pass off the backboard. They scarcely seemed to listen. Tip's oratory was never more magnificent.

When they were out on the court again Andy said, "I tried to give them the stopper for that jump play but you talked me down."

"They're doing all right," said Tip. "Easy does it."

Andy checked an abrupt remark and turned back to the game. The center jump play was going again. He reflected that it was a mercy there wasn't a jump after every basket as of old. Tate would have run up a lead that no team could overcome. Denver seemed totally unable to cope with it. Elmer Madden scored easily. The score became Tate 17, Denver 14.

On the throw-in Eggs Cantwell took the leather and dribbled downcourt single-handed. Andy held his breath as the red head bobbed about among taller Tate men like a cork at sea. Jerry Depew squirmed free and took a bullet pass. Pavelli came down center, took it from Jerry and pivoted. Eggs got free of Kamp and Pavelli snapped the ball to him. Eggs scored on the run, overhand.

Again Tate turned on the heat. Denver had no solution to the tricky offense. Elmer Madden spun about the court, taking passes from every direction. Kamp picked Eggs off briefly and Tate scored again.

Andy noted that the burly Kamp was handy with his elbows in close. The offi-

cials appeared not to notice, but Eggs Cantwell's face was grim when he went to his position.

Eggs took a pass out of Elmer Madden's hands and stalled briefly. The team went into Andy's favorite figure 8, one man passing behind the other, the ball going backward, then coming forward as each man ran around.

They worked it down, nearer and nearer with the big Tate men futilely trying to break it up. Eggs made the arc nearest the basket. Gil Mandeville gave him a high pass. Kamp was close enough, but Eggs backed and held the ball high, flipping it with his wrists. He let his arms follow through, dropping them heavily. The heels of both hands caught Kamp in the face, staggering him. Eggs grinned and danced back to take his place.

Tip Colson said, "Skivak, go in for Cantwell."

Abe Skivak, looking puzzled, obeyed. Eggs came off slowly, reluctantly. He said,

"We were just getting hot, Coach."

"I don't like slugging, Cantwell," said Tip sternly. "We play clean basketball at Danver."

Color mounted in Cantwell's face. He protested, "But he gave me the elbow, Coach."

"That," said Tip loftily, "is not the point."

Andy made space next to him on the bench. He said to Eggs, "Forget that junk, kid. Tip's grandstandin' for the mob. If you let those muggs push you around you'll never get any place."

Tate was putting on speed. Skivak was willing and strong, but he lacked the all-around brilliance of Cantwell. The period ended with the score Tate 23, Danver 17. Andy's hopes were sinking. He wondered if even Eggs could overcome that lead.

WHEN the last quarter started Tip made no move to reinstate the Danver star. Danver fought bitterly but it seemed a question of time before Tate struck again. Andy moved over to where Tip sat expressionlessly. He said,

"How about putting Cantwell back in the ball game?"

Tip said, "I don't think so much of it. Let him learn some discipline."

Andy said quietly, "You're acting queerly today, Tip. Like you didn't want this game. You better put Eggs back in there."

Tip said, "You're screwy, Andy. But if you want him in so bad, why it's okay with me."

Eggs went back into the game. Danver immediately clicked. The score went to Tate 25, Danver 22. Eggs exhorted his mates and raged down through the entire Tate team to drop in another.

With one point to the good Tate went back to a five-man defense. Again and again they hurled back offensives in their territory. With time running out Eggs set himself at midcourt and tried for a long one.

The gun barked while the ball was in the air. It hit the backboard, bounced to the rim, rolled around. It hesitated briefly, then toppled, outside. Tate had connected, 25 to 24.

ANDY was silent on the short ride home. He left the train and got out his coupé and picked up Annabelle. They drove out into the country road which was their favorite by-path. Andy said,

"Something's out of whack, toots."

"Because you lost to Tate?" she said. "A one-point margin wouldn't indicate anything very wrong."

"Tip kept Eggs Cantwell out of the game for almost a quarter. For a thing he should have praised. If the kid had been in there he would certainly have won the ball game."

"Maybe. If you'd scored again they'd have gone on the offense," said Annabelle shrewdly.

"You know too much about the game," said Andy. "Listen, baby, I'm serious. I've had a hunch things were not kosher all along. Little Davey recommends me a ball player. I'm the fall guy—I hire him. Then when he becomes the key man of the team, things happen. Like tonight. I don't like it, Annabelle."

Annabelle said, "My hero. He's getting smart, the lamb! But I agree with you, wolf. Something is definitely and decidedly lousy."

"But what can I do?" wailed Andy. "I don't even know anything. Tip ranks me here. He could even have me fired. I

can't prove anything. I don't even know myself if I'm right."

Annabelle said, "I see you need me, my wolf. I'll take over right away. You and me are now going to have a quarrel, if you don't mind."

"About what?" said Andy.

"About nothing—as usual. I'm going to work on your charming roommate with the marcelled hair. It will be an experience."

"Hey, nothing doing," said Andy hastily.

"I am going to work on Tip Colson," said she firmly. "I am going to accept one of his many invitations and I am going to find stuff out. He is a very cagey gent and it may take some time. But sooner or later he will talk. He's the talking kind."

"You can't do that, Annabelle. Tip's a louse with women. I won't have it, I tell you," said Andy.

"Look, lambie. Do you want to have a real quarrel? Or do you want to pull in here and park awhile in case there should be a long drought?" she said.

Andy pulled into the familiar lane and parked.

DANVER snapped back from the Tate defeat and went its winning way. Andy was electrified one day to find that fate and an off-night had caught up with Tate and that the hitherto weak Holbert U. had knocked them off. The pay-off would be the second Tate-Danver game after all. Andy wondered how that figured with Little Davey.

He missed Annabelle terribly. Tip had casually mentioned that he was seeing her and that she was evidently angry with Andy about something and did Andy mind? Andy had snarled a negative reply and gone down to Trotter's for more beer than was good for him.

The night before the all-important game he met Little Davey, not entirely by accident. He said,

"Davey, I don't usually bet. But I want to lay some dough on Danver to win tomorrow."

"I don't blame you, kid," said Davey with what Andy took to be false heartiness. "It's sure pop."

"Yeah," said Andy. "I got five hun-

dred bucks here. Can you handle it for me?"

"Whew," said the gambler. "That's a lot of tomatoes for an assistant coach to be puttin' out."

"Well, I want to get married, you know," Andy said. "This game makes or breaks me."

"Why, I thought Tip took your girl away from you," Davey said involuntarily.

"You certainly know everything, don't you, Davey?" said Andy ominously. "How come? You and Tip that close?"

"Why—uh—no. I just happened to hear. You know how those things are," said Davey vaguely. "None of my business of course. Shouldn't have mentioned it. You got the five C's with you?"

"Here it is," said Andy. "And—if you cover it yourself, Davey, make sure you can pay off. Or else I might get sore."

"Ho. Not me. I'm bettin' on my boy Cantwell," said Davey.

Andy got into his car and drove out along the road which was his and Annabelle's. In a few moments a figure showed in his headlights and he stopped. Annabelle climbed into the car. Andy drove rapidly to his parking place and cut the lights. He said,

"Give, baby. Gee I've missed you."

After awhile she said, "Glad to hear it. Did you know your boy friend drinks whiskey and lots of it?"

"No," said Andy. "He never did before."

"He didn't come through until last night," said Annabelle. "He owes Little Davey his shirt, Andy. He's in a spot where nothing means anything to him except how he can pay Davey. The Tate game is the blow-off. You're due to lose tomorrow night. I don't know how or anything else, but you're due."

Andy said, "We're sunk. There isn't one damn thing we can do. We haven't a speck of proof. We haven't anything."

"He'll probably just yank your star Eggman at the crucial moment and no one will be the wiser," said Annabelle. "You can't go over his head. He can outtalk you any time. He's got Addison Ashley eating out of his hand. The Dean is his pal. I don't know what you're going to do, Andy."

"I don't either," said Andy. "But I'm takin' over. You've done your share. I'll

probably garbage it all over the lot, but I'll do something."

"You're an awful mush-head, Wolf," agreed the girl. "But it's about time you went on your own. It might make a man of you."

Tip breezed into their room late that night smelling of alcohol. Andy's temperature went up at the sight of the tall, smiling coach. He said:

"Got all the dough down?"

"What dough?" said Tip cheerily.

"The dough you and Little Davey are betting on Tate," said Andy, throwing discretion to the wind in a rush of anger. "Let me tell you something, you dirty rat. . . ."

Tip Colson said menacingly, "Wait a minute, Andy. You're out of line."

"I've been out of line with you a long time," said Andy. "You double-crossing punk. You'll play Eggs tomorrow night, though. You'll play him and like it. If you don't, I'll, so help me, break every bone in your thick head."

"You never saw the day you could take me, Derrick," snarled Colson, taking off his coat.

"I never tried," said Andy, "but this is as good a time as any."

Colson plunged at him. Andy feinted with his left and drove his right from the shoulder. His knuckles ached with the impact. Colson staggered backward. Andy threw another right and the bigger man crashed over a chair. Andy said, "That's just a sample. If we lose tomorrow it'll be more and worse of it."

Colson dragged himself to his feet. His features were distorted with rage and pain as he said, "Okay, wise guy. This finishes you and me. I'm gettin' out right now."

"You don't say," remarked Andy. "You better before I kick you out. Scram, rat."

HE walked the floor that night. He cursed himself for having lost his temper and tipped off the fact that he was aware of the double cross. Colson and Davey would certainly take steps now. Upon impulse he put on his coat and walked to the house where Eggs Cantwell had a room. He knocked on the door and the red head opened it, rubbing sleep out of his eyes.

Andy said, "Go back to bed, kid. I'm spending the night here. I'm afraid you might be kidnaped."

Eggs grinned and said, "Nerves got you, Andy?"

"No, it's the rats gnawing," said Andy. "Go to bed."

He slept in a chair. In the morning he had to go out for breakfast and then he had to meet Annabelle. When she had bawled him out for his hasty action he said stubbornly:

"I know I have no finesse, but something's got to be done. I haven't got brains but I got knuckles. I'll bust a couple, maybe, but we've got to have that ball game."

He was busy until an hour before game time. He went into the dressing room and immediately looked about for Eggs. The boy was not among those present.

He said to Jerry Depew, "Seen Eggs today?"

"Nope," said Jerry. "He always is early, though. He should be here by now."

Andy made his way among ball players in various stages of undress and found Tip Colson in a corner. He grabbed the coach's lapel and said, "Where's Eggs?"

"How should I know?" shrugged Tip. "He's late."

Andy said, "Remember what I promised you last night. It'll amount to murder if anything happens to that boy."

"You're acting very foolishly, Derrick," said Tip coldly. "I know nothing about Cantwell's whereabouts."

Andy left the room. He dashed down the steps of the gym and jumped into his coupé. He swore at traffic, tearing across town. He bounded up the steps leading to Cantwell's room. It was deserted. The youth's belongings were missing.

ANDY ran downstairs and found the landlady. She said, "I guess he's left. He paid me off and took his bags."

"Was he alone?" demanded Andy.

"Oh, yes. He didn't look too happy. But he was alone all right. He walked away," said the woman.

When he had returned to the gym and was slowly climbing the steps a girl came out of the shadows and said:

"I've been waiting for you, wolf. What's the trouble?"

"Cantwell's sold us out," said Andy bit-

terly. "He packed up and walked away."

"That can't be. He wouldn't do that," said Annabelle.

"He did it. Davey paid him to come here and paid him to pack in," said Andy hopelessly. "When I blew my top last night they went to work on the kid. We're licked."

"Look, Andy," said Annabelle. Her eyes were black in the dim light. "Don't quit, will you? You've been building for just this. Go in there and make that team fight. Give me your keys—I couldn't stand watching it. But don't quit, Andy."

"Okay, baby," said Andy. "I'll play along. And I'll still have my time with Tip. And with Little Davey later."

"That's the big, bad wolf," she said, kissing him lightly. "See you later."

She ran down the steps. Andy went into the gymnasium and clomped to the dressing room. The team was waiting with the hushed air of a group about to be executed. Andy said:

"You've been double-crossed, fellas. Egg Cantwell's left school."

Tip Colson said, "Why, I can't believe that."

"You keep out of this," warned Andy. "I'm taking this club over. Any objections?"

Tip Colson was silent. Andy said, "Colson generally makes the pretty speeches. But I've really got something to say. I've been afraid of this all season, boys, for reasons I won't go into here and now. I've been training Abe Skivak and Jerry Depew to switch into the game. Jerry will take Eggs' assignments. You've still got a ball club."

"And you got something more, tonight. You've been sold down the river, fellas. If you've got guts, real guts, that should make you a ball club. You should go out there and show them you're not a one-man team. Will you do it?"

They grunted and swore under their breath and shifted their feet. Andy was satisfied. He said, "Okay, kids. Go out there in high and stay in high. I'll give you further orders from the bench."

They came to their feet as one man. Tip Colson was forgotten as they filed through the door, each one stopping to briefly shake Andy's hand. When they were all out Tip Colson said:

"You can't get away with this, Derrick."

"No? I'm doin' all right so far," said Andy. "Want to make anything out of it?"

Colson said spitefully, "Go ahead, boy scout. Have your fun. I'll settle with you later."

AS he went to the bench Andy thought ruefully that it would be easy to settle with him later. If Tate won they would both be out of a job and he would be settled out of hand. If Danver won Tip would find some way to steal the credit and fire his assistant. He blew on his bruised knuckles and promised himself a time later, come what may.

The whistle blew and the ball went up. Chink Latzo went right to work with his center jumping but Andy had given them that one. Abe Skivak's block on Kamp was a revelation of speed and deftness. Gil Mandeville left his position and followed Elmer Madden closely enough to actually steal the ball under the basket.

Danver went into the now familiar figure 8. Andy was pleased to see that Tate still had to figure out a defense against that razzle-dazzle. Even without Eggs the team looked good whirling in their short circles. Jerry Depew took it in the foul circle and scored almost negligently.

Madden's throw-in went to Fritz Kamp who lateralled back to Elmer. The Tate star dribbled swiftly to mid-court and passed to Fortune. Abe Skivak moved in from nowhere and broke up the pass to Latzo. Jerry Depew stole the leather.

Skivak yelled, "Set," and Jerry froze, waiting. The Danver team came down like an avalanche, four men into Tate territory. Jerry bounce-passed to Abe and ran back to cover.

Abe lined to Sam Pavelli and checked. Pavelli bounced to Jerry and cut back of his guard. Jerry worked it over and short-passed to Abe. Abe scored easily.

Again the Tate offensive failed to click. Andy said to Joe Corvil, "Get in there, kid, and stall. Tell the boys to hold that lead. Walk the line and pass. If they catch you, go back to work."

Corvil, the tall, streamlined football end, went on the court. Andy put his arm around Pavelli as he came out and said,

"You'll be back in there plenty, kid. We're playin' a new game tonight. Plenty of rests for everybody and freeze that ball. Get a lead and hold it. It's our only chance with Eggs out."

Corvil walked the line with the ball, slinging it back into Tate territory, watching the ten-second rule, stalling for time. Tate raged about, trying ineffectively to break up the floor game of the hot Danver boys.

ELMER MADDEN could not be denied forever. Gil Mandeville pressed a little too hard and the referee gave him a free one. Madden didn't miss free ones ever. A moment later he snatched a bounce pass out of Jerry's hands and was away down the court, fighting his way with sheer individual brilliance. He passed to Crimp Magee and the other Tate forward somehow found a hole through which to slip in a two-pointer. The score became Danver 4, Tate 3.

The play became a dog fight in the center of the court. Danver stuck stubbornly to its five-man defense. Another free shot tied the score for the moment but a double foul on Kamp allowed Jerry to cash in two more.

At the end of the period the score was still Danver 6, Tate 4. Andy put Sam Pavelli back in the game. His strategy, he knew, had held the score down and given Danver the bulge. But he was afraid of Elmer Madden.

In the second quarter the great Tate forward took an out ball almost at mid-court. Danver went into its solid defense. Madden looked them over carefully, cradled the ball in his big hands and shot. The long, arching toss plunked off the back board and dropped in.

Andy said to Orvie Littleton, "Go in for Gil. When that guy gets the ball cover him, somehow. He ain't human."

Littleton went in and followed Madden like a leech. Pavelli stole the ball from Kamp, dribbled cross-court and passed to Depew. Skivak and Littleton pulled a quick pick on Fortune as he guarded and Jerry got away to score from a difficult angle.

Littleton covered Madden like a tent. Time crept away.

Then the concentration on Madden left Magee free. Chink Latzo used his great height to seize an overhead pass and arched it downcourt. Magee was all alone to cash it.

Three seconds later Kamp made a blind stab and intercepted a pass from Jerry to Abe. Again Magee was under the basket for a bunny shot. The score went to Tate 10, Danver 8.

Now Danver opened up and began weaving their intricate, slow but sure pattern down the court. Madden, momentarily a free agent, dug into the game. He got his hands on a backward pass intended for Pavelli and dribbled along the sidelines. Orvie interfered desperately and Elmer got himself a pair of free ones on a personal. He dropped them in.

A TATE substitute ran on the floor and Andy realized with sinking heart that two could and would play the stalling game. The tall Tate five were past masters at the art of walking the black line. Orvie Littleton fought so hard that he fouled his four personals and was given the old heave-o. Tate converted each foul to make the score Tate 16, Danver 8.

The half ended. Andy walked disconsolately off the court in the wake of his downhearted squad. In the dressing room Tip Colson waited with Addison Ashley, bespectacled Director of Athletics. Ashley said sternly:

"What is happening here? How dare you take over the basketball team, Derrick? Where is Cantwell? What is the meaning of this hurly burly?"

Tip Colson interrupted smoothly, "Why, Mr. Ashley, young Cantwell seems to have left school unexpectedly and for no known cause. As to Derrick, I told you that he has some notion that he can run the team better than I can."

"What have you to say to that?" demanded Ashley of Andy.

"Nothing," said Andy.

"Well, is it the truth?"

"Sure. Except that there's something very fishy about the whole thing," said Andy. "I thought I ought to take over before something else went wrong with the squad."

"Are you insinuating that I had something to do with Cantwell's disappearance?"

said Tip Colson. "Why, you know as well as I that my whole future lies here at Danver. Would I jeopardize that future?"

A VOICE in the doorway said, "Gimme my suit. Hurry up. Help me dress, some of you birds."

"Eggs," howled a dozen men in varying keys. "Where you been?"

"Never mind that now. Tell you later," said the red-headed youth. "Help me get dressed. I want to get into this ball game."

Tip Colson's face was a study in mixed emotions. He stammered, "I don't think—"

Addison Ashley said, "This is very irregular. I don't know—"

"Anything," said Andy. "You never did."

"This boy can't play for me," shrilled Tip suddenly. "He deserted the team. I won't have this."

Andy said to Ashley, "Any reason why Cantwell should not play?"

"Well, certainly not," said Ashley bewilderedly. "I really—I don't know—"

"That's what I said," reiterated Andy. "You don't know anything. Well, get a load of this and you'll learn something."

He started a left for Tip's body. The big coach tried to beat him to the punch, but this time Andy did not feint. He let the left ride through. It doubled Colson over. Andy slapped it home to the head and straightened him up. Then he put a swinging right to the jaw. Tip Colson went over as if he had been pole-axed.

"Am I in charge of this team?" he said to Ashley.

The Director of Athletics said caustically, "Really, this is beyond me. Why you should strike Colson, I mean."

"I know," said Andy wearily. "Scram. You can fire me tomorrow if I'm wrong, but meantime you better get out from under foot. Come on, you kids. Let's see if Tate can take it. Nobody else around here can."

They went out swarming like locusts in Kansas. They broke up Latzo's old center jump play and fed Eggs a pass in mid-court. The red-head looked over the five man defense of the Tates and dribbled straight into it.

Man after man had a shot at him. He whirled among them like a flash of red-

tipped light. At the last second with everyone around him he found an opening and passed swiftly to Jerry. Jerry scored. The board changed to Tate 16, Danver 10.

Tate threw in and managed to work down to the basket, but there the embattled Danvers broke it up. Gil Mandeville bounced a pass brazenly between tall Latzo's legs to Sol Levin. Levin back-passed to Gil. Jerry and Eggs crossed each other downcourt with the guards pursuing. Eggs cut in a reverse and took a timed pass from Mandeville. Sam Pavelli took it from Eggs and pivoted. Eggs shook Kamp and came into the play at close quarters. Sam gave him the ball.

Eggs looked for Jerry. Morrie Fortune had him covered. Eggs gave it back to Pavelli and moved behind Jerry's man. Jerry ran around fast. Fortune spun and ran into Eggs. Jerry scored again. Tate 16, Danver 12.

THE Danver stands had taken heart and were howling for blood. Andy sat on the edge of the bench and wondered how long it would last against Tate's fighting five.

The pace was killing. Andy detected a harsh note in Sol Levin's breathing and sent Piggy Betts in to relieve the hard-pressed guard. Tate was desperate now, stalling for time, stemming the Danver rush.

Eggs Cantwell tore a pass off the fingers of Crimp Magee and pivoted. Piggy Betts, fresh and strong, came rolling up from guard and took a fast one into the corner. The rotund reserve guard steadied himself and had plenty of time to make it good. Tate 16, Danver 14. The period ended.

Abe Skivak's face was drawn and lined with the pace they were setting. Andy said to Joe Corvil, "Here's another spot for a pinch-hitter. Go in there and get tough."

Corvil grinned and said, "I'll slay 'em, Andy."

Skivak panted to a seat beside him and said, "They're mighty strong, Coach. I'll be all right with a minute's rest. If Eggs can keep it up—"

Time was getting short with Tate using every stunt known to the game. Then Eggs stole a toss-in from the boundary line and started a set play. Corvil and

Sam Pavelli switched so quickly that Tate was caught flat-footed. Eggs gave the ball to Corvil. The big end leaped high in the air and flipped overhand from the edge of the foul circle. He missed and Eggs made a grab for the ball. Kamp overcovered and Eggs had a free one. He converted to make it Danver 15, Tate 16.

Tate tossed in and gave up trying to protect their slimming lead. Elmer Madden flashed again, seeking points. Piggy Betts began to puff and Sol Levin begged to go in. Andy let him go with orders that the stronger Gil Mandeville should take over on Madden. Then Sol broke up a Madden-Latzo pass at mid-court and broke up the attack.

Eggs took a bounder and dribbled down-court past three Tate men. Jerry Depew was free for a second and Eggs passed to him, cutting back. Jerry promptly gave it back to Eggs. With the lead hanging in the balance the hand of the red-head never trembled. He sunk the shot as calmly as if in practise. Pandemonium broke loose in the big gym as the score changed to Danver 17, Tate 16.

ANDY hesitated. It was a spot to play safe. The game was running swiftly to a close. If Danver could hold the five-man defense line as well as they had in the first period they could win by a point.

He remembered Tate's attempt to play safe and how Eggs had cut down their lead. Elmer Madden was roaring up and down the court out there. A loose ball anywhere would let him have a shot. Andy said:

"Abe, go in for Joe Corvil. Tell the boys to play out the string. One point isn't enough against Madden."

Skivak bounded onto the court. In a second the Danver offense was proceeding merrily. They started with an out under the Tate basket.

Depew threw into Eggs. Eggs side-stepped, pivoting, and passed to Pavelli. The tall center dribbled three steps and ran into a Tate stone wall. He paused until Eggs rolled up behind him. Then he rolled the ball along the floor to Cantwell's feet.

Eggs came up with the leather and grinned at the looming Tate men. Side-stepping Fritz Kamp, he let go a long one from the waist, snapping his wrists.

The ball went high into the air, seemed

to hesitate. It dropped straight down with backspin and passed through the net scarcely disturbing the hempen strands.

Andy said, "That did it. That breaks their backs. They're licked."

They were licked. They fought hopelessly now, until the gun barked and Danver at last had its Conference championship.

There was madness on the smooth boards as the Danver mob descended upon its heroes of the moment. Andy fought his way to the dressing room, herding the sweating, laughing players ahead of him.

THEY gathered there, no one making an attempt to change his clothes. The air was charged with tension. Addison Ashley and the Dean of Men, Paul Beasely, came in. Tip Colson was between them, his jaw swollen and his eye a beautiful purple. The Dean said:

"Mr. Derrick, I believe some explanations are in order. What reason do you have for assaulting your superior, Mr. Colson?"

Eggs Cantwell stood up. He walked over and planted himself in front of the three men. He said:

"I can tell you about that, sir. It was on account of me."

Tip Colson was pale. He could not run but he had the appearance of a man who would rather be elsewhere.

Eggs said, "I came here on a scholarship offered to me by Mr. Derrick. But I couldn't have come if Mr. David Corbin hadn't helped by giving my mother money to live upon. We are poor people and since father died I have been the sole support of my mother. Mr. Corbin said he was a friend of my father's and would be glad to help out if I could get a scholarship."

Andy said, "So that was it!"

"I saw nothing wrong with this as I intended paying Mr. Corbin back as soon as I could," went on Cantwell. "Well, this morning I got a note on the Dean's stationery telling me that Corbin is a common gambler and that I was fired out of school. And if I didn't leave at once I would be arrested."

"Why—no such note ever left my office," said the startled Dean. "This is all news to me."

"Well, I fell for it," said Eggs. "I left town and went away. Then someone got to me and showed me where I was wrong and that someone had forged the Dean's signature to the note. It wasn't a very good forgery. So I came back as fast as I could."

"Colson never could write worth a darn," said Andy.

"Colson? Do you mean to say Colson had anything to do with this? Preposterous," exploded the Dean. He was furious.

"Oh, yeah? Look at his face. He's about to bust," said Andy. "He's mortgaged to the hilt with Dave Corbin. He's in a spot now that we won and more dough is lost."

"Is this true, Colson?" said the Dean.

"Well," said Andy, "who else knew about the arrangement with Corbin and Cantwell? Certainly a pal of Corbin's. Tip is Corbin's intimate. Let him deny that."

Eggs said, "His handwriting on that note can be identified. Besides, I know it was him. It couldn't be anyone else, I know that now."

COLSON licked his dry lips. He said, "Now I can explain everything."

Andy raised a big fist and said, "You're not going to explain anything more around these diggin's, wise guy. I'm going to fix that right now."

Eggs Cantwell was ahead of him. Leaping into the air the red-head swung heavily. Colson went down and out. Andy said reprovingly:

"Tch, tch, Eggs. That was a very clumsy wallop. I see I will have to teach you how to hit."

The Dean said, "Well, I never saw—I mean, this must not get out, boys. The scandal would be terrible. We will allow Colson to resign and leave town. Derrick, you will, of course, take over. You seem to have your heart in the job."

"At increased pay," murmured Andy softly.

"Of course. Of course. See to it, Ashley. See to it," said the Dean, removing himself somewhat hastily from the scene.

He felt his dignity was somewhat in danger.

Ashley said hesitantly, "I'm sorry, Derrick. I don't—"

"Know a damn thing," said Andy, helping him out.

"Okay, Ashley. You're excused. See you later about that raise. Don't forget that."

He turned to the team, "I don't have to tell you how good you are. You're champions. Eggs, who in the world dug you up for us?"

The gallant forward shuffled his feet. He hung his head and said, "Gee, I was a sap to fall for that fake note. An' to think a dame, a co-ed, hadda figure it out."

"Annabelle!" shouted Andy. He ran out of the dressing room and down the hall. "Annabelle, by all that's holy," he repeated. "What a fool I was not to figure that out."

His coupé was parked up against a "No Parking" sign. He jumped in and grabbed her around the neck. He said:

"Darling. It was you. You figured it all out in your smart little head and went and got him. But where? How did you ever manage it? How did you know where to look for him—that's what I don't understand?"

"Let go of me, wolf," said Annabelle. "Where would I find him? Where does every man go when he's licked? To his woman. You come to me—Eggs went to his mother. He was bawling like a baby when I found him. In her arms. It was pathetic. Of course anyone could see through Colson's dumb note. It did have the dean's fine pompousness."

"Baby," said Andy humbly, "you're wonderful. Can we go some place now and rest my poor knuckles? They're all bruised up."

"How about Little Davey?" said Annabelle. "And that five hundred dollars? Or wouldn't you be interested in using that money to get married on, say, next week?"

Andy blew on his right hand. He sighed, "You got me, baby. I can't refuse you. But my hands are gonna look like hell, all swollen up at the wedding."

New Rules, New Thrills...

By "SPECIALIST"

The heat's on! And the spectator gets a break in the revamped court code. Gone are those jump-ball delays! The play speeds up, the scoring mounts and the bench jumps into the show.

THE spectator will find basketball suited to his fancy this season. The rules committee has opened its heart and given the customer plenty of consideration in effecting changes in the court game. The principal change in the official basketball code for 1937-38 puts the ball into play in the center circle of the court only at the beginning of the game, at the start of the second half, after held ball and after technical fouls and double fouls.

The procedure will be the same as last season when a foul goal is scored; the ball will go to the team scored upon, out of bounds under the opponents' basket. The team scored upon will immediately take possession of the ball and start the action. The official does not handle the ball in either case.

In the past, the two centers returned to the circle for a center-jump after each goal. There was always delay by players or officials and the spectator often found his interest in the game lagging. The shift in the rule will bring more speed into the game and should prove more interesting to the fans. The dull periods will be done away with entirely by forcing the players to speed up their movements on the court. It means perpetual play and no time for players to "rest" or stall before the ball goes back into action.

The change will open up the game to permit more scoring. This is something Mr. Joe Public has wanted for a long time. He comes to the game to see lots of shooting and goes away dissatisfied when plenty of action is missing. With the new rule and the ball going into play without the center tap, both teams will find it difficult to get their defences set. Many scores will be made by one and two long passes down the court with a shot following.

With speed the underlying factor in the game for the coming season more will depend upon the lasting qualities of the

teams than formerly. The ball has to come out of the backcourt in order to pay dividends in the matter of scoring, and it will take fast going for the full forty minutes if a team wants to be in front at the final whistle. No team can afford to tire or bog down. This means that more and more reserves are going to get into action for a change.

The day of the five-man team in basketball is passé. It will take five starting players and a complete supplement of capable substitutes to engage properly in any contest this winter. The rules state that a player may return to the game twice so we are going to see far more substituting than has been witnessed in past seasons.

The spectator ought to be pleased at this. He will see many more players in action and the interest will not be confined to one or two stars but spread to the entire squad. How often in past campaigns have rival coaches and fans sung the praises of one or two individuals in speaking of the accomplishments of a team! Now the interest will be spread out over the entire squad. True, a starting team may be a veteran aggregation properly conditioned and possessing better than average marksmen, but what of the reserve material? Here may be the answer to many a game's results. The reserves will have to be almost as formidable as the regulars if a team wishes to stay in the running under the new rules.

Then again the manner and time of making substitutions will prove of interest to the followers of a team. The coach will have to think of the opponents' reserves in the same grouping as the regulars and will have to be on his toes in the matter of sending in replacements. The coach has to keep in mind the strength of his own outfit, and in addition must make substitutions to offset the strength and power

of the rival quintet. In ice hockey they replace the forward line as a whole to freshen up the attack. The same idea will follow in basketball.

Scoring will spread out over many players as a result of using more men in a game. This will tend to do away with discontent and everyone will feel that he has a part in the team's performances. There will not be just one or two stand-out stars on a club like in past seasons—the whole squad will figure in the show.

Of course, this matter of substituting will give coaches and trainers additional work. They will have to work faster on subs and regulars to have them ready for replacements during the progress of the game. Every man on the bench will have to be constantly ready for action at all times.

The trend of the new rule is to do away with stalling, and this is further emphasized by a deliberate foul rule which allows the team fouled two free throws from the foul line. This is to prevent a team that is one or two points behind in the closing minutes of the game making a deliberate foul to get possession of the ball. Here in the East this was called a "smart" foul by the fans.

Remember the spectator's part in the game when teams were guilty of "freezing" the ball, stalling and making deliberate fouls to gain possession of the ball near the close of the game? You never heard such howling, booing and handing out of Bronx cheers as went on in most gyms under the circumstances.

NOT all, of course, will favor the taking away of the action at the center circle, and will feel sorry to see the center-jump done away with. For many there was always a moment of great suspense in a tight basketball game as to which team would get possession of the ball from center; the team out in front or the rival vainly endeavoring to close up the gap. If you are behind by a point, possession

of the ball meant you had a chance to take a last try at the basket and because of this fact the center tap proved interesting to many.

Unless teams are in shape, the game will not work out to the ideas of the changes in the rules which look for added action and swifter movements around the court. It will take a little time this season for the teams to get used to the change. At the end of the 1936-37 court season the New York University Freshmen and the College of the City of New York Jayvees played one half of their game according to the new rule. The contest was played at a clinic held for Eastern college coaches by the Metropolitan Basketball Writers' Association at Madison Square Garden.

Despite the obvious unfamiliarity of the players with the temporarily changed rules the game did throw a little light on the difference between a contest played without the center tap and one with the fixture. The game proved faster and much harder for the combatants and substitutions were frequent. Boys who had played most of the game were thoroughly worn out and said they missed the brief breathing spell afforded by bringing the ball back to the circle before resuming play. We will find out lots more about this now that the rule is in force.

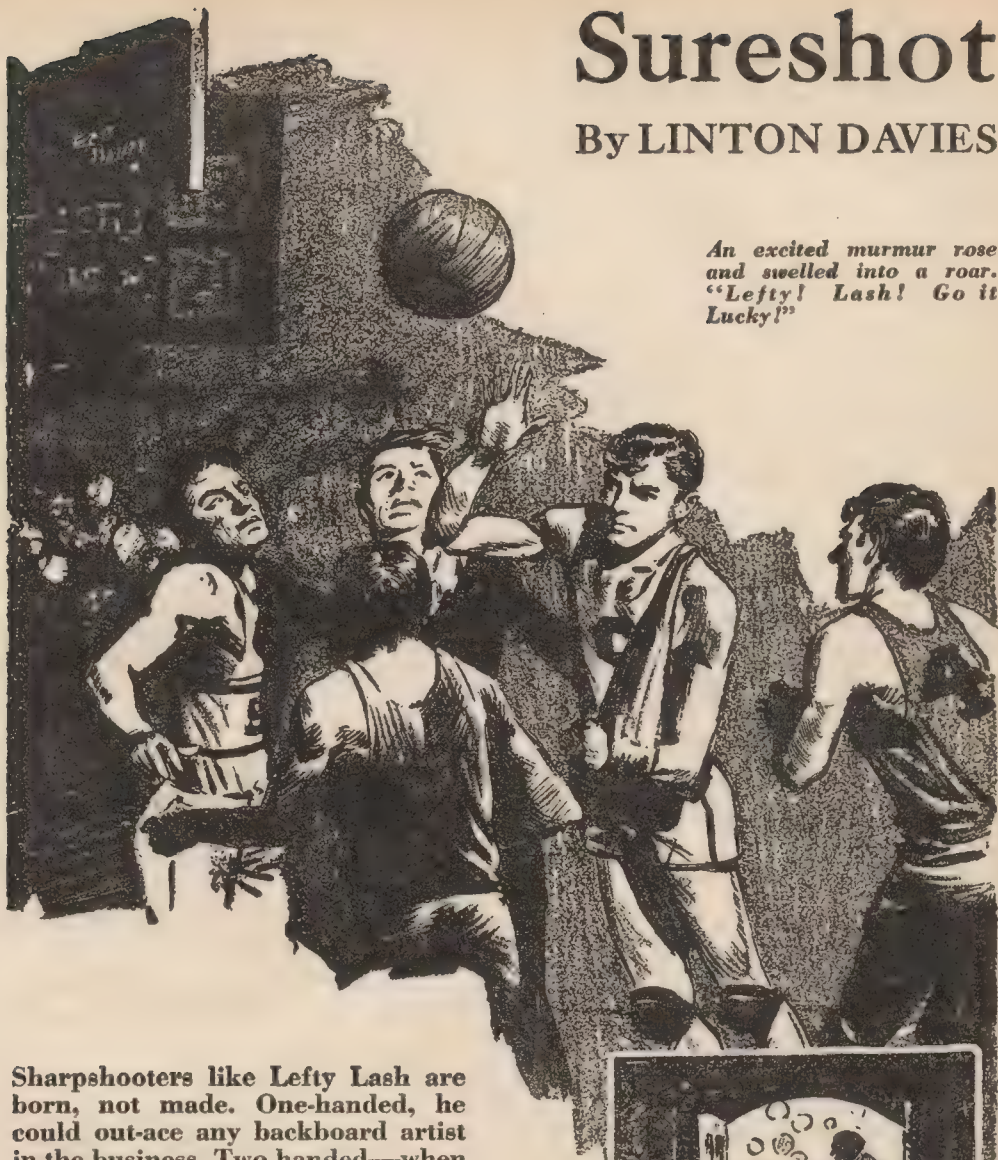
With the game speeded up, we will find many new mechanical devices like time clocks, more modern baskets and such gadgets introduced to add interest on the part of spectators. One of the newest of these ideas recently approved by the rules committee is a rigid double-ring basket that causes a light to flash when a goal is scored. Here again is a movement to create spectator interest. The basket with a light attached gives new thrills and excitement to the sport.

There is no doubt in my mind but that the spectator interest came out on top in the rule changes for this coming season. This will, of course, aid the game by giving the players and coaches more support.

Sureshot

By LINTON DAVIES

An excited murmur rose and swelled into a roar. "Lefty! Lash! Go it Lucky!"



Sharpshooters like Lefty Lash are born, not made. One-handed, he could out-ace any backboard artist in the business. Two handed—when that miracle-moment came—the 7-day-wonder was a fabulous flop.

A Complete Novelet



CRANING forward from balcony and sidelines, the crowd held its breath. The white-jerseyed referee tossed the ball. As if catapulted by the same spring, the rival centers leaped.

The rangy giant in the light-blue shirt won the tap. The ball slapped into the hands of a light-blue forward. Stopped dead as he pivoted for a dribble, his hasty pass was low. His teammate juggled it, lost it. And a watchful maroon-shirt shov-

eled it off the floor and down the court.

A drawn-out "Ah-h!" rose from the crowd.

Dad Brill squirmed on the Taylor bench. His champions of last year were dubs tonight. The slim young spectator against the wall, gray eyes keen on the play, squirmed in sympathy with Coach Brill. Beside him a spectacled youth growled, "What's the matter with the varsity, anyhow?"

Half an hour later a gun barked. It was over—and little Tech had held the champions of the conference to a four-point victory!

Dad Brill put the question in the locker room.

"There's your first game of the season," he said evenly. "Your first win—and maybe your last. You're not playing! Not the way you can play! Have you forgotten games don't just win themselves? Are you stale? What's the trouble, Bart?"

For a moment Bart Edwards, captain and forward, slowly shook his blond head. His voice was the least bit surly. "Can't say, Coach. We just lacked the zip."

"Tom?"

The big center met the coach's eye with a baffled air. "I can't put a finger on it."

Brill turned to the other three of his stars of yesteryear. George Disston, stocky carrot-topped guard, spoke up. "Tech's stronger than last year, Coach."

"That's not reason enough," retorted the coach relentlessly.

The other guard, Fred Martin, moodily poked a shoe with a sock-covered toe, avoiding Brill's eye. Vandy Porter, dark-haired, audacious forward, prankster of the squad and one of its quickest thinkers, couldn't think of anything to say.

Brill eyed them sternly. "We shift to the new gymnasium after the dedication tomorrow night. Maybe the fast court will speed you up. If it doesn't . . . I'll have to find a new team." He rubbed his chin with a weathered thumb, glanced from one silent figure to the others in turn, and left them.

DAD BRILL was beset with doubts. Maybe, he said to himself as he let himself into the locked gymnasium the next day after a flashy practice session, a new court will speed up those cocky guys. Maybe, he added sourly, a kick in the pants would do it better.

He strode down the entrance hall of the huge new building to the doors opening upon the basketball court, turned the knob and pulled. Then he stood stock-still, in surprise that mounted to quick interest as sight of the lone occupant of the court.

The youth was in overalls and faded blue work shirt. But he was not working. Off to the right, on the sideline, a

big polishing broom lay disregarded. Its errant operator, his back to Dad Brill, stood on the gleaming white foul line, a worn basketball balanced nicely in his left hand.

The coach squinted in puzzlement. He stopped breathing as the overalled youth poised for a throw *with his right hand at his side*. That trim shoulder swung back, and the lad shot, left-handed, in a chest shove, for the basket.

Soaring with a clean loft, the ball gyrated slowly, and fell—so true that the hoop was undisturbed, and only the sway of pristine white net marked the passage of the leather globe.

Dad Brill whistled softly between his teeth. He looked dazedly for the ball-tosser, and saw him trapping the ball as it was about to roll over the end line. "Hey!" Dad Brill shouted.

The lad looked up, startled. Ball in hand, he walked slowly to meet the coach. On the highly polished floor he stepped with a poise that annoyed Brill, whose feet found uncertain footing on the waxed hardwood.

Some of his irritation came out in his growl. "Who're you?"

The lad glanced at the broom in some confusion. "I'm assistant janitor," he explained.

"Hm. Then why aren't you sweeping, instead of playing monkeyshines with a ball? And whose ball is it, anyway? One of the squad's?"

"No, sir. It's one of my own. I mean, my only one. And I'm all through work. I'll go over this floor again. Though my shoes are clean." He lifted one foot to show the smooth leather sole and heel.

Brill marveled. "You mean to say you can walk with those slick soles on this floor?"

"Why, yes, sir. I'm used to all kinds of floors—smooth as this or pretty rough."

"Where was this?"

"High school league. The Upstate League."

"You've played high-school basketball? And you're a student here? How is it you haven't turned out with the freshman squad?"

"I'm a sophomore, sir. Transferred from Holmes, to get in the engineering school here."

"Sophomore, hey? Eligible for the varsity? Well, well, how is it you're not out for practice?"

The lad lifted his right arm, gave it a scornful look. "This arm. Busted it, and the ligaments never healed right. I haven't played basketball since high school."

"Hm. So you shoot left-handed. . . . Can you shoot another?"

Without a word the lad stepped quickly to the foul line, gauged the distance, and snapped the ball again, with the same eye-filling shot, a shove from the chest. The sphere described a lazy parabola, and dropped cleanly into the basket.

Brill grunted. "Again."

The lad recovered the ball, moved to the right side of the court, eyed the basket, and suddenly hooked the ball underhand. It flew low.

"Missed it," said Brill to himself.

But the drab leather globe slapped the far side of the hoop, jiggled in the circle, and dropped through the net. The coach gasped. He walked mincingly on uncertain footing toward the waiting youth.

"Hm. Know who I am?"

"Yes, sir. You're Dad—er—Coach Brill."

"Want to play basketball?"

The lad's gray eyes flashed. Then he gave Brill a keen glance. "Do you think I could, with this arm?"

"Why not? Report tomorrow, in the athletic director's office. And in the meantime, there's something you can do for the team. Something like this." He talked fast, with a gleam in his eye.

THE whole student body of Taylor University was jammed into the basketball court of the new gymnasium for the formal dedication of the building that night. Also on hand were a dozen visiting dignitaries, one of whom, a prominent alumnus, had made a brief address. Now came the christening of the court.

From the sideline, where students jostled far beyond the edge of the court—since there would be no play tonight—stepped Coach Dad Brill, resplendent in dinner jacket, boiled shirt and black tie. He raised a microphone which was hooked up to amplifiers.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he announced, "to dedicate this court to the ideals of clean

sport, the members of last year's championship basketball team will form on the foul line, each to shoot a basket."

Applause. Cheers. From the sidelines stepped the blond Bart Edwards, the grinning dark-haired Vandy Porter, big Tom Kirkland, Fred Martin and George Disston. All handsome chaps in their Tuxedo finery.

Brill tossed a new ball to Edwards. The captain caught it handily, eyed the basket, tossed—and slipped, his dancing pumps flying out from under him. He sat down hard. The ball missed the basket by a good two feet.

A roar of laughter rose, was hushed instantly as Edwards looked up with a bewildered scowl, and welled up again as he grinned sheepishly and stepped back to the sideline.

Somebody tossed the ball out, and Vandy Porter grabbed it. Scowling, he looked down at his feet, took a cautious stance, and swung slowly. The ball smacked the near side of the hoop, and bounced back. The shot was a foot low.

Nobody laughed this time. Instead, a low murmur filled the hall. Porter stalked off the court angrily, but not forgetting to step cautiously lest he slide.

Tom Kirkland threw, and made it, though the ball for a moment seemed perversely inclined to roll out of the hoop. Fred Martin crouched tensely, tossed, and hit the backboard for a miss. George Disston took a long swing, bounced the ball off the hoop to the backboard, and sighed as it caromed back for a basket.

A cheer rolled out. But it was short-lived, and the hum and buzz of excited voices filled the hall. Taylor's five stars had made only two out of five tries for a free goal!

Brill, alone now in the center of the court, held up a hand, and the buzz died away. "And now, to conclude the exhibition, I present evidence of the value of consistent practice. Difficult one-hand shots, by Sophomore John Lash."

A smattering of hand-claps followed as Brill, his face wooden, waved a hand. Who was this Lash? Ah, there he was! Stepping to the foul line. He seemed cool enough in his neat-fitting blue street suit and sober tie. The crowd stared avidly. Who was Dad Brill putting up.

The gray eyes squinted at the basket, the left hand came up—and the spectators watched mutely as the ball snapped from the shoulder in a high arc to a sweet goal. For a moment the silence held, and the smack of the ball on the floor was audible at the far corners of the packed hall.

Then a bedlam of cheers broke out. The slender lad in the blue suit smiled shyly, accepted the ball from the end line, moved six paces to his right, and hooked to the basket. Clean through the net. Again the crowd roared.

JOHN LASH moved again to his right and nearer the end line. His circling gave him a sight of the first-team stars grouped on the sideline, and he felt a strangely uneasy thrill as he saw them staring. Quickly he shifted the ball to his left hand, swung it overhand, high—into the basket. Then he turned to Brill, saw the coach nod, and walked off the court as the applause reached a crescendo.

But his effort to lose himself in the press between sideline and wall was foiled. A hand fell on his arm, and he turned to face Bart Edwards.

The blond captain eyed him in perplexity and some chagrin. "Fellow, that was sweet shooting," he told Lash. He laughed in confusion. "I couldn't even stand up out there. Why aren't you out for the team?"

"Well. . . ."

"He's turning out tomorrow." Tom Kirkland had ranged alongside Edwards. And there too were Porter, Disston and Martin. The center went on to Edwards. "Coach just told me Lash is eligible for the varsity."

Vandy Porter laughed. "You'll be taking my job, Lash! Honest, now, why haven't you been out?"

John Lash smiled shyly. "I'm really not so good. And besides, I have a job around here. Assistant janitor."

Edwards stared. Porter opened his eyes, and chortled. "So that's it! Lefty Lash, the Clean Sweep!"

The other four roared. Lash colored, and the smile left his lips. He turned away, so hastily that he collided with a small dark-haired girl in a crimson-traced black dress. "Sorry," he mumbled, and as her brown eyes widened in annoyance he hurried on, out of the hall.

The five stars watched him. Soberly Edwards said, "Vandy, you shouldn't have said that." The others murmured in agreement.

"Yeah, I know," admitted Porter. "I guess I was burning because he showed us all up. Well, we *were* lousy—but why did he have to do it one-handed?"

II

THE sign on the door read *Director of Athletics*. John Lash turned the knob and walked in, to find himself in an anteroom occupied by a girl at a desk. She looked up, then stared coldly.

"So it's you, Mr. Lash," she remarked with some asperity. "Have you come to apologize?"

Lash blinked. "What? I don't—oh! You're—why, yes, you're the girl I bumped into last night. I—er—sorry." He fumbled with his hat.

The girl was regarding him with mingled amusement and mock severity. "Are you always a day late?" she asked. "You seem to be able to shoot a basketball fast enough."

"I'm not much good," he assured her. "But Coach Brill asked me to turn out, so I'm here to report."

"For basketball?" She took a card from a file. "Name? Address? From what school?" He told her. She wrote his answers, and added *sophomore*. "Anything else out of your personal history?" she asked brightly.

He regarded her for a moment with a trace of irritation for her airy manner. Then, "You might put down that I'm an assistant janitor," he said coldly. "That fact seems to amuse the whole campus. Maybe you can get a kick out of it."

She gave him a quick glance, then laughed merrily. "Why should it? I'm a working woman myself. Secretary to the Athletic Director—and something of a charwoman myself, in this office."

Lash eyed her for a moment, then grinned feebly. "Well, that's nice. And—er—what's your name?"

"Moirá Cavan," she responded pertly. "Not that you'll be needing it. I do my own sweeping."

"Oh." Lash turned brick-red to the roots of his wavy brown hair, and turned

on his heel. The door slammed shut.

"Well!" said Moira Cavan to herself. "A touchy one." She picked up her pencil, but it rested idle on the sheet before her as she stared meditatively at the blank face of the door.

Outside, Lash almost cannoned into George Disston. "Oh, hello, Lash," the guard greeted him. "Signed up?"

"Yes," Lash nodded toward the door. "Gave the dope to Miss—er—Cavan. Nice girl."

Disston gave him a sharp look. "Yeah," he drawled. "Vandy Porter's girl."

"Oh," Lash nodded. Hurriedly he inquired, "Going to the gym?"

"Yep. Come on." Disston led the way from the administration building. The two emerged on a wide walk, and headed for the gymnasium. A pair of strolling students hailed Disston, stopped to stare at Lash. The guard returned the salutes, and grinned at his companion. "You're quite a freak, Lash," he remarked. "Campus doesn't know whether to rate you a genius or a show-off. Come, now, which is it?"

"Neither," Lash retorted. "Of course, I'd like to play, but—I don't know."

Disston eyed the slim lad curiously. "Coach tell you the reason he wanted you out?"

"N-no. Just to fill out the squad, I guess. He did tell me—" Lash hesitated. Then he plunged ahead. "Well, I guess all you fellows know. He said he wanted me to show off last night to remind the whole squad that practice makes perfect. I hope you aren't holding it against me."

"NOT me," Disston assured him. "Of course, it might be—well, a little bit different with Edwards and Porter and Martin. They're all seniors, and seniors turn haughty, you know. Kirk—that's Tom Kirkland—and I are juniors, and bad enough, I guess. But you made us all look silly when you made all your shots, and we missed three out of five."

"It was the floor," Lash explained patiently. "I was used to it—sweeping up ever since they finished it. And you wore leather on that slick surface."

"Yeah," Disston agreed dubiously. "But the boys are taking an awful ribbing." He gave Lash a sidelong look. "Er—while

we're on the subject, you—er—don't mind the chatter about your being a janitor?"

Lash stared ahead as he walked, and said evenly, "No, not a bit. After all, I'm a pretty good janitor."

Disston laughed. "Right spirit. Going to drop it, now you're on the basketball squad?"

"Can't. I need the money. And I've got my work hours changed."

They reached the gymnasium, entered a side door, and plunged into a noisy locker room. Players in various stages of undress greeted them familiarly. "Hi, George! Hello! Hey! Give a cheer, boys—here's Lucky Lefty Lash, the Clean Sweep!"

Lash flushed, but met the curious stares with unconcern. Disston showed him a locker, and he sat down. A lad on his left offered a hand. "My name's Struve," he announced "This is sub country hereabout." He indicated the double row of lockers in a sort of corridor. "This is Gorlitz." A swarthy short lad stuck out a hand, nodded, and went on with his dressing.

A whistle blew, and Lash hurriedly laced his remaining shoe and pulled on his shirt. He followed the others as they filed out of the room to the court a flight above.

Four teams formed, each in a circle, on the floor as Dad Brill, in a dingy gray sweater, called names. The first team was in one corner, chatting as they waited for a ball. Brill saw Lash, and beckoned him to another group. "Try your hand at forward over here," he commanded. "Randall, take Lash on your five."

A lazy-looking six-footer came up. "Okay, Coach. Hi, Lash. Over here. Play left forward when we line up." He caught a ball flipped by an assistant coach, and shot it to the man behind him. Around the circle it went until it came to Lash, who, catching it with his left hand, attempted to shove it with his right. It went wide, and rolled to Brill's feet. He picked it up, saw glances directed at Lash, but said nothing. Lash caught the next pass and hurried the ball along with a two-hand shove. At once a twinge traveled up his right arm. He set his teeth, and continued the practice.

A whistle stopped the warm-up. Brill pointed to the varsity. "Five minutes," he announced. "The champions versus

Randall's scrubs—Randall, Struve, Gorlitz, Meek and Lash."

Lash tensed. Here he was in a practice game—against the Taylor varsity! He trotted to his position—and was assailed with misgivings. He was left forward—on the side of the court where he could shoot, when close, only with his bad arm.

He had no time for worries. In the center ring, big Tom Kirkland and Randall stood face to face. Brill, at one side, tossed the ball. Kirland won the tap and the ball fell into Verne Porter's waiting arms. Meek sprang to screen him, but Porter flashed past on a dribble. Halfway to the basket Struve stopped him and he passed to Edwards, who flipped fast with a neat goal.

"They look good, don't they?" Randall was at Lash's side, speaking low. "Personally, I think the coach figures they're loafing. Maybe you can get a spot on the first team. I'll try to slip you a ball."

Lash nodded, but as he took his place he felt his right arm. It looked like the old trouble. In slow practice it had never bothered him, but now, in play, he was feeling the strain on ligaments once torn and never healed.

BEYOND the end line Randall, throwing in, caught Lash's eye and heaved a fast one past Disston. Lash took it, pivoted to find himself in the clear, and dashed down the side line with the *pat-pat-pat* of the dribble sweet music in his ears.

At the center line Edwards caught him at a tangent, and he flipped a lighting pass to Gorlitz. Edwards turned in, and the swarthy forward shot back to Lash in the corner. With a full overhand sweep Lash laid the ball in the basket. Varsity 2, Scrubs 2!

Then the varsity turned on the heat. Lash, warmed up and eager, was in every play, but the savage dashes of Edwards and Porter left Meek and Struve behind. And when the scrubs for an instant would regain the ball, Martin and Disston rode them to hasty passes that lost them a dozen scoring chances.

Three goals had gone to the varsity's credit when Lash got the ball on the left side of the court near the end line. He rifled it out to Randall, who, screened by both Martin and Disston, slapped it back.

In desperation Lash tried for goal. But his left-hand hook, swinging near the end line, missed the hoop by three feet.

And it was on this play that Brill blew the whistle.

"That's all for you two teams. Other teams, line up." He walked over to Lash. "Why didn't you throw that last one with your right hand?"

"It's gone bad." Lash ran his fingers gingerly over the upper arm and shoulder. "First time I tried it out, it went stiff."

"Mm." Brill eyed the arm. "Well, better give it a rest. I'll put someone else on Randall's team tomorrow." He strode to the center line to signal resumption of play.

Randall had heard the coach's last words. "Laid off, eh? That's tough. Anyway, Lash, you did what the coach wanted you to do."

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"You know—stirring up the varsity with that swell exhibit of yours last night. And you did it again when you shot that basket right after their own. Notice how they speeded up? I guess that's your mission in life—according to Dad Brill."

"Oh." Lash nodded. "Yeah." He watched the two scrub teams in center court, then turned back to Randall with seeming nonchalance. "It was fun, though, playing with you. Hope I get a chance again some time."

"Sure," assured Randall heartily. "Any time, fella."

HALF an hour later Lash was walking down the dusk-shrouded walk. So that was it! Just an alarm-clock for the varsity! And everyone on the campus knew it—except John Lash. His face was grim as he began the turn on to the walk that led toward his rooming house. Suddenly he slowed. Far down the walk was a vaguely familiar figure. Yes, it was Moira Cavan. He hesitated, then wheeled and strode toward her.

She recognized him as he approached, and stopped. "And how did the practice go, Mr. Lash? And how many baskets did you shoot?"

"One," Lash informed her. "My first and last, I guess, for Taylor."

The brown eyes widened. She surveyed him gravely. "Why?" she asked bluntly.

For a moment he was tempted to tell her of the troubling arm. But he stifled the words. Give her a chance to pass the story along—perhaps as an alibi? No. Apparently only Dad Brill and John Lash knew about that. Let it go. He eyed her with a wry grin. "You see, Miss Cavan, I'm not a regular player. I'm just an ostrich egg on the wall."

"A which?"

"To encourage the hens to do better. I shoot baskets to keep the team informed that it can be done, that practice makes good shooting, good screening, good passing. Et cetera." He shrugged. "That's something you might add to my personal-history card. It's been nice to see you. And—" he added with a grin "*—it was* handy, my knowing your name. Maybe I'll have a chance to use it again."

She smiled, wrinkling her nose at him. "Maybe. . . . And are you going to keep on with the practice?"

"Why not?"

"Of course. Why not? It'll straighten your back, after your toil over a broom!" She laughed, flicked him a wave of her hand, and passed on.

Lash grinned. Somehow, a broom would never seem quite so unfriendly a thing, he thought, now that he knew Moira Cavan.

And then suddenly he remembered that Moira Cavan was Vandy Porter's girl. . . .

III

RINGED around the polished floor that in its waxy sheen winked back at the great archlights overhead, the crowd watched with like witnesses at an execution. Taylor rooters held their breath chatter. Even the Rittenden section across the court sat or stood subdued by the startling tidings of the scoreboard. Taylor—great Taylor, champions of the conference—was trailing.

At the end of the bench Dad Brill hooked his right leg over his left knee. Then he slowly and carefully uncrossed his legs, and crossed them again with the left leg up. He said nothing.

In the middle of the bench, John Lash sat swathed in a heavy sweater. Out of the corner of his eye he had watched the play of Dad Brill's legs. Well, he thought, the old boy can't blame me—I delivered the

order. But he couldn't help feeling a warm rush of sympathy for the coach.

And for the players on the floor. Big Tom Kirkland was breathing hard. Of the five champions, he had worked hardest. And the strain was telling on him. His foul-line play had been perfection, and in the up-court passing his long arms had more than once averted disaster. Yet Taylor was trailing.

The guards were drilling in doggedly. For that matter, so were the forwards. Then how explain the score?—Rittenden 14, Taylor 12.

You couldn't put a finger on it.

But Dad Brill knew, John Lash knew, and even the players themselves revealed by their harried looks, that Taylor was in a slump.

John Lash was worried. He had seen this great team in action only once, a year before, and had marveled at their dash and daring in a crucial game. Now they were wilting, outplayed by a team rated no better than fourth in the eight-team conference. Uneasily he wondered if his own appearance on the scene had upset their team-play. But that couldn't be. . . .

The ball, shuttled down the court by Porter and Edwards, struck a barrier in the Rittenden guard and went out of bounds. In the breathing spell, Lash's eyes strayed over his shoulder to his left.

She was still there. He had spotted her earlier in the game, when she was leaning forward, intent on a play near the Taylor basket. Now he found her eyes on him, and the shock of meeting that level glance of dark brown eyes confused him. He smiled tentatively, and she nodded brightly.

He turned back to the court—and met a hostile stare from Vandy Porter, who, near the foul lane, was waiting for the throw-in. . . .

And here it came! It was intended for Porter, but the dashing forward wasn't ready. That by-play between bench and girl had caught his eye.

Too late he stabbed for the ball, but it eluded his fingers, hit the floor—was snapped up by a speeding Rittenden man and rushed down the court. The light-blues rallied in haste, but too late. Rittenden's center took a quick pass, flicked the ball, without halting its journey, into the hands of his forward. And the jubilant

forward, with time to burn, shot an up-swinging, down-breaking, net-swishing basket. Rittenden 16, Taylor 12.

ACROSS the way, Rittenden rooters howled in glee. On the Taylor side, the low murmur of discontent was lost in the din. Lash shivered. Suddenly he felt a nudge at his elbow. Randall was whispering something, there at his side.

"See Coach!" And Randall nodded significantly.

Hastily Lash rose and trotted to the right end of the bench. He stopped before Dad Brill. "You sent for me?"

The coach looked him up and down. "Pretty well bundled up, aren't you, son?"

Lash grinned sourly. "I didn't expect to take this off tonight."

Brill's eyes gleamed. "Think you could shoot a couple of baskets?"

"Could I?" Lash's face lit up. But he sobered instantly. "I believe I could—from right court."

"Okay. Go in." He indicated two officials who sat nearby, each with watch in hand. "Report to the scorers. About five minutes to play before the half ends. Porter out."

Porter! The forward was being jerked because Lash had smiled at his girl. Lash felt a momentary qualm of guilt as he ripped off his heavy sweater, and raced to the scorers. "Lash, seventeen, for Porter!"

The scorer looked up, startled. For eight games—or was it nine?—no member of the Taylor varsity had been replaced so summarily. Restups, yes; but here was a substitution made in cold blood with Taylor in the red. The scorer shot a quick look at Dad Brill's averted face, turned to wait for the completion of a pass, then sounded his horn.

The eleven men on the court whirled as one, in slow surprise. A substitution from the Taylor bench. The referee strove to keep the astonishment out of his expression. Lash, striding onto the court, felt that eleven million faces, rather than eleven, were swimming in the air before him. Haltingly he addressed the referee. "Lash, for Porter."

Vandy Porter stared unbelievably at Lash. Then, aware suddenly that the attention of all the players was on him, he spun on his heel toward the bench. But as

he passed Lash he spoke gratingly. "After my girl and my job! Lash, you certainly try for a clean sweep!"

Edwards moved up, slapped Lash on the shoulder. Then he sprang to position. Lash followed suit as the referee poised to toss. Kirkland knocked the sphere to Lash's right. He stabbed for it, knocked it down with his stiff arm, caught it on the bounce with his handy left and was off on a dribble. Two Rittenden men bore down in a close screen, and Lash passed across court to Edwards, then streaked on the side line past the screen. Edwards saw the dash and cashed in. His bullet-pass was aimed far ahead of Lash, but the slim speedster was there when the ball arrived. His catch merged like lightning into a dribble that flashed all the way to the right corner where a Rittenden guard was hurrying up hotfoot.

But Lash had his stance. He hooked it, high, with plenty of loft. And in the silence he thought he could hear the swish of the ball dropping through the net.

The crowd came to life. The Taylor side resounded with wild cheers, while on the Rittenden side excited voices asked, "Did you see that one-hand shot? Boy, what a honey!"

Edwards was slapping Lash happily. Tom Kirkland nudged him with a playful knuckle. But both, Lash could see, were plenty worried. Rittenden still had a two-point lead.

A Rittenden guard threw it out from the end line. At once a teammate whirled to dribble out of danger. But in his haste he crowded too close to the screening Lash. His shoulder dug into Lefty's ribs, and Lash went down.

THE referee's whistle sounded. Lash arose with a wry grin for the discomfited Rittenden man. And the Taylor five moved eagerly for the free throw. Edwards motioned encouragingly to Lash.

Someone, high in the balcony on the Taylor side, caught that signal. "Down the chimney, Lefty! Make it a good one!" The crowd on the Taylor side took up the chant. "Drop 'er down, Lefty! Give us that point! Wipe out that margin!"

Lash set his jaw as he took the ball from the referee and toed the foul line. Before him he saw Edwards, Kirkland, Martin and

Disston. Where was—oh, yes, Porter was out. And Lash was in! Pinch-shooting for the varsity. His good left hand trembled, and he shifted on his feet. Suddenly he saw Tom Kirkland's anxious face, and realized that for several seconds all eyes had been upon him. How many seconds? He had only ten. . . .!

With a rush of breath he thrust from the shoulder. And his heart sank. It was a bad shot. Too strong. The ball clanged against the far side of the ring, teetered—fell through. The skill of practice had checked the error of a hasty throw.

And the stands were rioting again. On Taylor's side, with cheers. The Ritten-den forces were clapping with grudging admiration for the second score by this left-hander. And the scoreboard read Ritten-den 16, Taylor 15.

Edwards came up, grinning. "Nice going, boy! How about one more—before my taffy hair goes gray?"

Kirkland shook the captain's arm. "Bart! Let's feed the kid, since he's going good! what say?"

For a moment the captain hesitated. He eyed Lash with narrowed eyes. "Okay, Lash? Yeah? All right, Tom, feed 'im!"

They fed him. Swift slaps from the jump, rifle-shot passes up-court, sizzlers that tipped Rittenden fingers and found a welcome in the lean arm of John Lash. Always he jockeyed to the right corner, and when the pass beat the Rittenden screen, the ball lofted to the hoop. Again, and again, and yet again. And when the gun ended the half, the scoreboard read Taylor 21, Rittenden 16.

In the locker room Dad Brill walked up to a flushed and exultant Lash. "Nice work, son. And how's the arm?"

Lash started. The arm. He kneaded the triceps, and winced.

Brill nodded. "Thought so. You've had enough for tonight."

"But . . ."

"No buts. Take a shower, and get a rubdown. Right away." The coach turned away, beckoned Porter to the fast-talking varsity group. The forward moved eagerly up, tossing a wintry smile over his shoulder at Lash's discomfiture.

A squat bald man with bright blue eyes waddled up as Lash peeled his shirt off. "Rubdown, heh? I'm the guy. C'mon

over here." He led the way to a flat slab and jerked his thumb. "What's the trouble? Right arm? Oke. . . . Tell me how this feels." He ran three stiff fingers deep into the lean triceps, and nodded almost as if in satisfaction when Lash bit his lip to stifle a cry. "Thought so." He sat on the edge of the slab, and gestured to the empty benches where, a minute before, a chattering crowd of players had thronged. "They don't know it, and they won't know it. Dad keeps his lips buttoned, and so do I. So I guess it'll just be a secret among the three of us—seeing as how you won't talk if you know it's all for dear old Taylor."

"WHAT are you talking about?" Lash managed to say.

The trainer beamed upon him sympathetically. "You'll never make the team, that's what."

Lash scowled. "Why not?"

"There's the why not." The squat one pointed to the aching right arm. "It won't take it. You can play a few minutes, then it stiffens up on you. Right?" Lash nodded. "Well, that's it. Dad guessed it, after your first practice. Now he's sure of it."

"So I'm all through." Lash slumped wearily.

"No you ain't! That's just the point!" The trainer jabbed a finger. "You practice—light—and you warm the bench, just so those prima donnas'll think you're crowding 'em. Of course, you play some—a few minutes at a time. Maybe not enough to earn a letter."

Lash nodded savagely. "I begin to see. And I keep my mouth shut about this arm."

"Sure! Otherwise the players'll know you're just a dud, and they'll slack off. An' lose games." The fat one shook his head sympathetically. "Dad knows, and I know, it'll be tough for you if the students get the idea you're just a show-off—what we called shock troops in the war. Good for a spurt, but not enough stamina to see it through. But Dad figures you'll do it—an' now I've looked you over, I think so too. Remember, you'll be keeping this team on edge, and I don't mean perhaps!"

Lash nodded. "Sure. I see. And it's okay with me. I won't mind what the players and the students may think. Only—" He met the trainer's eye. "You

keep your lips buttoned, do you? Well, do you know Miss Cavan—Moira Cavan?"

"Sure! Her an' me's like this!" He held up two hugging fingers. Then he blinked, and nodded slowly. "Oh! Like that! And so?"

"Does she know—about this arm?"

The trainer shook his head sadly. "Dad says no. But say, she's no fool. Fine girl. You could do worse. Leave it to her to figure it out."

Lash thought he would. Then, as he turned in to his rooming house after the game had ended—Taylor 25, Rittenden 16—he remembered the incident that had probably impelled Dad to take Vandy Porter from the game. On an impulse he ran up the steps and sought out his landlady.

"Do you know where Moira Cavan lives?" he asked her.

"I do that," she responded warmly. "And are you a friend of Moira's?"

"Er—hardly. But I have some important information I ought to give her right away."

The motherly woman smiled. "I'll find ye her phone number," she said. And was as good as her word.

Lash waited nervously as the call went through. Then he heard the mellow voice of Moira Cavan. "It's John Lash," he told her. "Can I see you for a few minutes tonight?"

The wire was silent for a moment. Then, "It's late," said the girl firmly.

"It's important," said Lash.

"That's your story," retorted the girl. "However—you'll find me on the porch, if you hurry."

Lash hurried. He was a trifle out of breath as he sank down on a settee beside Moira Cavan. He wandered if that was because he had been walking fast.

"There's something I'd like to explain," he began, plunging in without salutation. "It's about your nodding to me at the game tonight."

"Well?" asked Moira Cavan tartly. "Is that a crime?"

"No, no. But Porter was taken out of the game because of it."

The girl bent forward with a frown. "John Lash, have you been drinking?"

"What? Why, no." Lash grasped a handkerchief and mopped his forehead.

"It's very complicated. You see, I was told that you're Vandy Porter's girl . . ."

He stopped, aghast. The girl's brown eyes were snapping. "I suppose Vandy Porter told you that," she said hotly.

"No, he didn't!"

She subsided. "I've gone to dances with Vandy—but I'm nobody's girl! Understand that, Mr. Lash."

"Yes. All right. But let's agree that Vandy's interested in you. He happened to see you nodding to me tonight, and it distracted his attention so that he missed a pass. Right after that, Coach Brill took him out of the game and put me in. I feel a little guilty. And—I decided to ask you if you could explain to Dad Brill. You see, Vandy wouldn't, and I—well, I wouldn't want to say anything about you without your permission to any . . ."

"John Lash!" The girl's exclamation stopped him. "You know a player isn't supposed to be looking anywhere except at the play. However, I suppose you won't be happy unless something is done. I'll—I'll attend to it."

"Ah—er—thanks. Then I'll be going, Miss . . ."

"Don't hurry." She eyed him amusedly. "I'm not considered such poor company by most of my visitors."

"It's not that. I think you're swell!" Lash's eyes glowed. Then he gulped, squirmed, and finally grinned feebly, meeting her eye. It was the girl who looked away, a warm color showing in her face under the moonlight and the street light. Hurriedly she changed the subject. "You played well tonight."

He nodded reluctantly. "That's my job. I guess you know."

"What do you mean?"

"Why—don't you—oh, well, I mean—Taylor expects every man to do his duty. That sort of thing."

"Of course. And maybe you'll be a regular soon."

Lash said nothing to that. The girl didn't know. He rose slowly. "Moira, if you're nobody's girl, could I—may I . . ."

She laughed. "Mr. Lucky Lefty Lash," she said, "don't be in such a hurry to consider yourself that lucky!" She chuckled at his confusion, and he thought her laugh was the most musical sound he had ever heard. She laid slender fingers on his arm.

"Come to see me again if you can spare a few minutes from your baskets and your brooms!"

He walked away with elation and gloom struggling to dominate his whirling thoughts.

IV

DAD BRILL played a canny game. He'd call John Lash to him near a foul line, and while the whole squad watched, he'd turn him loose on the baskets. Free throws from the foul line, quick field goals in rapid succession. Then he'd hustle the lad off to the bench.

Or maybe he'd throw him in with Randall's second team, and see to it that Lash had a few chances to score on the varsity. But only for a few minutes.

He had the squad wondering. Wondering if Lash was being groomed for a varsity spot, or for a super-substitute. And he had the varsity wondering too. Often Bart Edwards' puzzled glance left the play to find Lash on the bench. And as for Vandy Porter, that normally light-hearted wisecracker had turned gloomy and savage. The varsity was tightened up.

Edwards sensed this, and so did big Tom Kirkland. Both felt that Lash deserved—credit, or blame? Ruefully the two agreed that it was hard to say, what with Vandy Porter biting their heads off at every turn, and Martin and Disston demanding to know what style of play, if any, could be followed with the constant threat of lunatic left-hander hanging over them.

They sought out Lash. "Lefty," said Bart Edwards, "you're good for us. You stir us up. Maybe the stirring turns us sour, but after all, vinegar has more bite than honey. I'd like to see more of you off the court. How's if you drop in on me an evening?"

For a moment Lash was tempted. Then he thought, "If I say yes, Dad Brill's whole scheme may blow up. I might talk in an unguarded moment." And on the heels of that thought came the suspicion that Edwards, after all, might be just feeling him out—masking a snare under a hearty invitation. He shook his head.

"Thanks, Cap," he said. "I'm pretty

busy. Heavy course, and work and practice on top of it. That's a lot, anyhow."

Edwards, acknowledging the explanation, accepted the rebuff with equanimity. Kirkland, trying another tack, got the same result.

"I'm in engineering, Lucky," he said slowly. "Anything I can do, notes and that sort of thing. . . ."

"Thanks, Kirk. I'll remember."

Lash remembered. But he held warily aloof from his squad acquaintances. He took the floor less often for practice when he saw that Dad Brill was pleased with the varsity's pickup. He spent lonely hours in the evenings, and bore down on his studies to ease his lonesomeness. Fearful that his listless actions on the court might convince her that he was giving up easily in the struggle for team honor, he stayed away from Moira Cavan.

He could not know that she was puzzled and concerned by his strange conduct. Privately she had spoken to Dad Brill about Vandy Porter's defection and John Lash's odd defense of the dashing forward.

Brill had chuckled. "The Lefty kid evidently thinks that if a player misses a pass because he's looking at you, the defense may plead extenuating circumstances."

"Now, Dad!" she said. "Don't you go poking fun at my fatal beauty."

"Fatal to Taylor's chances if the whole team took to keeping an eye on you. Say! Is young Lash looking your way, too?"

"Not lately," she said.

"Oho! Do you tell me that the sweeper of floors has swept you off your feet?"

"Dad Brill!" She turned on him stormily.

With a feeble cry of protest, Brill raised a shielding arm, and beat a retreat through the door. Outside, he chuckled. "Little Moira! Well, he's a good lad. . . . Taking his medicine without a whimper."

DAD BRILL knew what bitter medicine could taste like. He had tasted it often, and in the next few days he tasted a double dose. Taylor won two games, with John Lash on the bench. But the first, taken from the cellar champions, showed only a six-point edge. And the second went to overtime before the varsity came to life and scored a single goal.

Then Moira Cavan stepped into Dad Brill's gloomy picture. She cornered the coach on a rainy afternoon, and faced him with determination.

"What now?" he asked feebly.

"Albert University," she retorted. "Three nights from now. They're fast. Can Taylor win this one?"

"Well?"

"Well! What you need is a surprise package—something to stun the Albert team, and wake up the varsity. Now this is what I've worked out." She laid three diagrams down on the desk before him.

He studied them keenly. "Hm. . . All the passes go to the right. John Lash, eh?"

She nodded. "He's sure-fire when he's anywhere near the basket, on the right side. You know that."

"Hm. And how about players B and C?" He indicated the letters on one diagram.

"Randall, and Struve."

"Struve's a guard."

"But you need a guard for these plays. One man to screen—and Randall is a swell passer. Struve to break up the opposing passes, and Randall for the passes to Lash."

"You'd have me take out the whole varsity forward line?"

"And wouldn't they burn up!" She laughed merrily. "This would be just to stir things up, Dad. And get a few early scores. Then put the varsity back in—and how they'd dig!"

"Hm. . . Maybe they would. Yes, I guess they would. I'll think it over, and decide whether you're just trying to make young Lefty into a hero all for yourself." He ducked a swing of a dainty fist, and laughed.

THE campus buzzed. The varsity had cracked! Three subs would start the game with Albert!

Dad had thought it over. And at once he had begun practice with Randall, Lash and Struve on the forward line, and the veterans Martin and Disston in the guard spots. Jaws agape, the five had started in secret on Dad's new plays, while Edwards, Kirkland and Porter exchanged wry glances outside the court.

The plays were simple—but nothing like any Taylor attack in years. So they should shock the Albert hoopsters to their gum

heels. Taylor had always had two forwards. Now Taylor had only one—John Lash. All the plays feinted to the foul lane or the left corner, then shifted fast to the right, and Lash and his good left hand.

Patiently Dad Brill went through the new series with his revamped team. Then he called in Edwards, Porter, Kirkland, Gorlitz and Meek, swore them to secrecy, and sent the teams together. For twenty minutes, with only a few rest periods, he kept them at it, while his eyes glowed.

The day of the game arrives—and with it the morning papers. On the way to his first class, Lash bumped into Porter and Disston.

"Hi, Lefty!" called Porter. "Seen the paper? They sure made you the hero! Photo and everything!"

Lash paused, surprised. He scarcely noticed that Disston had muttered a sharp reprimand to Porter. "No, haven't seen 'em yet. Later. Thanks." Then he went on.

He saw them later, much later, and his cheeks burned. His picture was there, all right. Just a head, with a gangling figure in gym shirt, pants and shoes drawn below it—and a gigantic broom in its hands. The caption read, "Can Lucky Lefty Sweep Albert Away?"

For a moment he thought of Vandy Porter and the malicious smile he had displayed, and of Disston's muttering. He shrugged. Then suddenly he thought of Moira Cavan. This stuff—this publicity stuff! It came out of the Athletic Director's office, didn't it? And it would be Dad Brill's work. An angry pulse beat and shook the fingers that held the paper. So that was the way she thought of it, too! He went to practice with a cold eye for his teammates, and plunged savagely into the trick plays. Randall eyed him curiously, but said nothing. Nor did the others. Only Dad Brill inquired mildly, "Feeling a little nervous, son?"

Lash shook his head. "Feeling fine, Coach. All ready."

The crowd was ready, too. Ready for whatever surprise might come. But not quite ready for the flurry of play that struck at the first jump, and whipped the Albert defense to a frazzle.

It was Randall to Struve. And over the

court to Lash, and back to Randall while Lash raced for his corner. And then the sizzling pass to Lefty—and the long looping shot that hung up a score for Taylor in the first few seconds of play.

The crowd roared. Randall slapped Lash gleefully. And the aroused Albert men glared at him, kept watching him as the jump came.

But Dad had mixed his plays. Randall and Struve feinted hard and persistently and drew the Albert defense in. First a dribble by Struve. Then he pivoted, sent the ball to Randall as Struve moved up. Randall to Lash, and across the court to Struve again. And then the pass, to Lash where an Albert guard still hung on. The guard tried to screen. But Lash whipped over an overhand lob that the astonished guard could only watch in its passage. It sailed high and came down dead to the hoop. Taylor 4, Albert. 0.

Dad Brill left them in for a frenzied five minutes while the score went up. Then they trotted off, Lash and Randall and Struve, while the crowd cheered them again and again. Taylor 15, Albert 0. "Lefty! Hi, Lefty! Lash!" The Taylor side roared blissfully.

There were more cheers as the half ended, and Edwards, Kirkland and Porter came into the locker room, almost as winded as Martin and Disston, who had played the whole half. The regulars had added six points while Albert had gleaned four. Edwards eyed Lash quizzically. "You gave us a hot pace, Lefty. And look what it's done to us." He panted in exaggerated style.

Porter favored Lash with an unfathomable look which the slender left-hander caught out of the corner of his eye. He nodded silently.

Dad Brill came over. Martin spoke up. "Went pretty well, Coach. Is this the regular thing?"

"No." Brill spoke shortly. "It wouldn't work if they were looking for it. You old-timers will start the next game. Fact is, I'm dropping Lash from the squad."

The team went out. And Lash was alone. The squat little trainer came around, and silently worked on the ailing arm. Lash was grateful for his silence. There was nothing to talk about.

He was just a flash in the pan to the

campus—a show-off who couldn't stick through a game. He was just a broomster to Moira Cavan.

And to Coach Brill, he wasn't even worth having on the squad.

V

AS he emerged from a late afternoon class, John Lash got a call to see the Director of Athletics. He looked at the penciled scrawl that a freshman had handed him, and marveled. Then he grimaced, and strode over to the administration building.

Moira Cavan was at her desk. She gave him a bright look, and stared when he grunted, "Got a call." He laid the slip before her, and stood, avoiding her eyes.

She said, "Yes. You're to go right in." He walked past without a glance at her, unaware that she had turned in amazement to watch him.

In the inner office was Dad Brill and a weazened little man with a bright stare. "Hello, John," said Brill. "Here's a scientist wants to look you over. Doctor, this is our freak."

Lash glared at Brill, then at the doctor. Then he swung on his heel and made for the door.

"Hey!" shouted Brill. "Wait a minute!"

Lash paused, half turned. "Well?" he grated. "If I'm a freak, at least I can refuse to be put on exhibition."

Brill shook his head. "Gosh, Lefty, I didn't think you'd be so touchy. You see, I couldn't tell you about it until it was all settled. The doctor here wants to look at that arm. Thinks he might work it into shape."

Lash's hat dropped to the floor. "No—no foolin'?" he gasped.

Brill grinned, waved an arm. "Doctor Blankenship, this is our John Lash. Look him over."

The good doctor did just that. After twenty minutes of pushing and prying, from spine to fingertips, he nodded cheerily. "Two weeks of intensive treatment, and it may be as good as ever," he assured Lash and the coach. "In the meantime, no work for this member." He handed Lash a card. "See me tomorrow afternoon at four." Without another word he picked up a hat and departed.

Lash heaved a deep breath. Then he turned to Brill. "Was that why you dropped me?"

"Sure. Why strain the arm when it needs rest? The doc tipped me off to drop you, even before he'd seen it."

An idea struck Lash. "How about his fee?"

"There won't be any," Brill replied promptly. "It's a game with the doc. When he finds an unusual case, he works free. He'd pay to get it if he had to."

"Well, that's fine. In the meantime, it's still a secret?"

"Sure." Brill's eyes crinkled. "We can pass the word when the arm is okay."

Lash walked out on air. He even forgot that Moira Cavan was sitting in the outer office, and passed by without turning his head, causing that assured young woman to sit up in her chair and stare after him with color mounting to her cheeks.

Taylor won two games, but John Lash hardly noticed it. Other hands wielded a broom in the gymnasium, so he had not even a glimpse of his battleground. He studied, and met the doctor daily. And his evenings were devoted to a contented nursing of that slowly easing right arm. Two weeks went by.

And the doctor looked up from a long examination.

"Will it be all right?" asked Lash anxiously.

The doctor grunted. "If you don't run it through a wringer," he said dryly. He patted the arm. "Try it out on a basketball. Maybe I'll come around to see it in action."

Lash walked fast to the gymnasium. He caught Dad Brill in the act of sending the squad to the lockers, and waited. The last player trotted off, and Dad turned.

"It's okay. The doc says I can open up."

Brill nodded. "Report for practice tomorrow."

IF it was a big moment for Lash, it was as big a shock to the squad. They rolled their eyes at him as he came into the locker room the following afternoon.

"Hi, fella!" Porter greeted him. "Who let you in?"

"I'm back," Lash assured him. "On the squad."

"Good enough!" Porter's smile was hearty. Beside him Bart Edwards grumbled, "Now we've got to speed up again. Say, what's this about your having had a glass arm?"

Little Meek appeared at the door. "Hey, fellas! See what the afternoon papers say about Lash? Say, Lefty, the paper has it all—about your bad arm, and how you couldn't play without wearing it down."

A dozen hands grabbed the paper. Lash grinned happily. He found it rather pleasant being a hero.

Then he saw the front page.

There was his photograph, and under it another figure, a work of the artist. A gangling figure in gym suit—with *two* brooms, one in each hand. That girl again. . . . Darn her! thought Lash.

On the court he put Moira Cavan out of his mind, and set himself to practice with a savage vigor. He missed two tries from the foul line and came close to missing the third. Then the second team lined up against the varsity.

Randall and Gorlitz played fast ball, and Meek and Struve did their full share. Halfway through the short game, though, Lash realized with a start that they had not scored once on the varsity. He was strangely worried by the time the coach blew his whistle.

Randall jogged his elbow. "No scores today, Lefty. Maybe the Doc was working for the enemy!"

Lash shook his head. But there was something wrong. He could feel it. What had become of that old sureness? That sense of having the old ball in the basket where he wanted it. Of course it was naturally a little difficult to get used to shooting with both hands, but practice would remedy all that.

VI

BUT practice didn't straighten it out. Long periods on the waxed floor, often with only the echoing walls applauding his rare shots through the basket, wore at Lash's nerves. He was getting no better. He was losing his confidence.

Dad Brill saw it and spoke to him. "Don't get all het up, kid. Maybe it will come back when you start a game." When

Taylor lined up against the strong Rittenden team again, Lash was up front, with Porter switching over to the left side. Dad was giving him a chance to show what he could do under fire.

But Lash didn't do much. His mind seemed as awkward as his arms. Rittenden broke fast and Lash saw the flashing plays as in a dream.

He ground his heel on the floor in dismay. Where was that shooting skill? He drove into the play with bitter fury. It was no good. His body wouldn't work for him.

It was Porter who snaked past a Rittenden man, pivoted, then shot. A beauty! Taylor 2, Rittenden 0.

Lash grinned wryly at his fellow forward. "You get the brooms, Vandy!"

"I won't keep 'em long, if you get going, kid."

The words were lightly spoken, but they cut deep. Lash flushed. *Would* he get started, that was the thing.

When the half ended the scoreboard showed Taylor 9, Rittenden 7.

In the locker room Dad Brill eyed Lefty gloomingly. "What's the matter, kid?"

There was nothing Lash could say. He could feel miserable and that was about all.

The second half was a furious milling of Taylor light-blue and Rittenden red. But all that John Lash saw was red.

Taylor won, by the scanty margin of three points.

Porter gave him a half-hearted slap on the back as they trotted off the floor. "You're out of practice, that's all, kid."

"My being out of practice kept the boys from making a decent showing."

Porter shrugged. "Every team goes sour once in a while. So does every player."

But maybe I've turned sour for good, thought Lash.

He met Moira Cavan on the walk, the day after the Rittenden game. She stopped, looked him in the eye. "You seem to have stopped sweeping, Mister Lash," she remarked.

He smiled crookedly. "Brooms wear out." He lifted his hat, slapped it on again, and walked on. Leaving her standing there.

Edwards started the next game, with John Lash on the bench. And Taylor scraped through again as in other games,

with a long agony of suspense for the Taylor rooters and a meager margin at the finish. Sign pointed to strong Midston chewing them up.

Moira Cavan sought out the captain. She talked long and earnestly, while Bart Edwards nodded his blond head. "It can't hurt to try," he agreed. "Come on, we'll pop it on Dad Brill."

The grizzled old coach was slightly dubious, but receptive enough. "You think that's it?" he asked, looking keenly from one to the other.

"I think so," said Edwards. "That and the fact that he's feeling like a worm. The squad gave him a bad razzing while he was going good. Now that he's lost his grip he thinks we're being kind to him."

"Hm," said Dad. "And maybe he's had a bad time in other quarters." He didn't look at Moira Cavan, but he knew the telltale color was mantling her cheeks. Dad was like that; he could see things without looking. "Okay," he said. "We'll try him once more. We'll give him a shot at Midston."

VII

LASH was so discouraged he hardly knew what he was doing as the squad filed into the court for the Midston game. The balcony was jammed. Spectators stood elbow to elbow in solid ranks against the wall. Taylor and Midston and all their cohorts were on hand for the big, the crucial, game.

Lash sank down on the bench between Randall and Struve. Half-heartedly he glanced around, annoyed to find himself looking for a familiar face. There she was, radiant and eager. She had been watching, waiting for him to turn, and now she smiled, but Lash kept on his wooden face.

"You might give the babe a tumble," Struve said, grinning at him.

"I don't like the stuff she writes," said Lash.

"What stuff?"

"The business about the brooms."

"Moira didn't write that."

"She didn't write it but it's her idea. It started as sort of a silly business between the two of us. Now it's spread all over."

Struve's dark eyes snapped. "Don't be a darned fool! Do you think you're the

only one who could see a gag in the broom stuff? Ruskin's been working that stuff up. He didn't mean anything by it, but some of us told him to lay off on account of you're being kind of touchy these days."

Lash's face was in a glow. "Is that straight dope?"

Struve snorted angrily but his eyes still held a friendly look. "Why should I bother to lie about it?"

The smile that came over Lash's tightly drawn face was good to see. "Thanks, fella," he said. "Thanks for keeping me from being a worse fool than I naturally am."

"Oh, you're all right," said Struve.

But Lash didn't hear him. He was standing, waving and smiling at Moira Cavan. She made a face at him and then she smiled back.

Almost at the same instant he felt a heavy hand on his shoulder and turned to find Dad Brill frowning at him. "Stand up, Lefty." The coach produced a length of laundry line from a side pocket. He began to thread it through Lash's belt, on the right side. Then he ran it up to Lash's elbow, wound it round and round, and tied it with a neat bow.

Lash gaped, juggled his arm. "What's that for?"

Brill grinned. "You're just a one-handed man tonight, son."

"You mean—I'm to play?"

"With your left hand." Brill shook a finger warningly. "All you have to do is shoot. The boys will feed you."

"The—the varsity?" Panic struck Lash, and his knees began to tremble. "I—I can't do it, Coach."

Brill gave the left arm a pat. "I think you can. So do Bart Edwards. And Moira Cavan. It was their idea."

"Bart? And Moira?" Lash's head was whirling.

"Yeah. Everybody thinks you ought to go good if you can hit your stride. Remember—shoot that ball! Get going, kid."

Porter and Kirkland were waiting on the shining hardwood. "Get this fast, Lefty. We're playing ball tonight. We're feeding to you." Porter punched him in the ribs. "Big stuff, fella. We'll jump these Midstons, and how!"

Lash gulped. "Feeding to me!" He looked from one to the other. They nodded, grinning. He grinned back. He was far too scared to speak.

Referee and Midston players had turned to stare at Lash and his bound right arm. The crowd, too, had spotted the strange business. An excited murmur rose and swelled into a roar. "Lefty! Lash! Go it, Lucky! Lash! Lash!"

The referee tossed the ball. . . .

In a daze, but with feet and hands that seemed suddenly his own again, Lash crouched as Kirkland missed the full slap. But the ball, seeming to fall wide of Porter, got no farther than Vandy's outstretched fingers. He shot to Lash. The gray-eyed rope-wound speedster dribbled and swooped to the right. A Midston guard swung out from the end line—too late to do more than watch as Lash, his gray eyes gleaming, swung his left hand back and hooked the ball far and true. It swished through the net and fell, to bounce undisturbed, as the Midston men stood, measuring that distance with their eyes, jaws dropping in their unbelief.

They rallied—the men in the orange shirts—and fought for the next play. They passed, across court, down court—and lost the ball as George Disston flicked it at a tangent to Martin. Martin hurled to big Tom Kirkland, and the second of the Lucky Lefty plays came into being with a wham.

A feint to Porter, a flip to Lash, and back to Kirk. Then Lash raced free—and caught the whizzing pass from Porter. He set him, breathing fast, right arm dangling at his side. A chest-shove, lofting, over a Midston guard a spread fingers, down to the hoop, and through.

From the Taylor ranks welled a booming cheer. "Lefty! Lash! Lash!"

And in the center of the court Lefty Lash stood with his heart beating high. Porter and Kirkland were slapping him and chortling. "We're on the way, kid! We're on the way!"

Big Tom cut in. "Everything all right, Lefty?"

Lash breathed deep. "Everything!" he answered, and a song seemed to sound somewhere within him. "Everything! It's a clean sweep!"

*The ball sailed upwards. . . .
At that moment the
pistol cracked.*



The Two-In-One Victory

By HARRY GOLDBERG

**A Championship looms mighty big for a day or
a week. A man's self-victory lasts as long as he
lives—and longer!**

A SUDDEN silence fell like a swift-dropping curtain over the spectators in the basketball pavilion. All eyes were focused on the guard of the Danville team who, balancing the ball delicately on the tips of his fingers, was posing for a shot at the enemy's basket.

It was a long shot—from mid-floor. And it was the last quarter of the Danville-Graham game. And Danville was only four points ahead. Thus the sudden, tense hush of the audience.

Henry Young, Danville's big guard, held the ball. He crouched, quickly came up,

and shot. The ball arched through the air while thousands of anxious eyes followed its course. Then the lace under the hoop waved gently. The ball had gone through without even touching the iron rim.

The spectators yelled their approval. Some laughed, for Young had been dropping in those long throws with uncanny regularity all evening. Anyone witnessing this game would have agreed that Young was the big gun of the Danville team.

But Young's great shot seemed to have had an opposite effect on Capt. Ben Tillson, center on the team. The latter bit his lip. His face flushed. Impatiently he brushed back the dark brown hair which had fallen into his eyes. For a moment his brown eyes followed Young, who was trotting back to his position. The eyes held no approval; in them were disgust and a slight trace of despair.

Another man who had viewed Young's shot otherwise than joyfully was Coach Fred Ackerman. Sitting with the substitutes on the long wooden bench that bordered the floor, the coach's teeth clamped together and from his throat there issued a guttural sound, not unlike a growl. The coach was mad, and he took no pains to conceal the fact.

The game ended a few minutes later, and Danville had won the opening fracas of the season by three points. As the spectators filed out they commented mainly upon Young's marvelous shooting, which had outshone his equally great guarding.

In the dressing-room Captain Tillson emerged from an icy shower and came face to face with the coach.

"See me before you leave, Ben," the coach said.

Tillson nodded. "Okay, coach."

Ben knew what the coach wanted to discuss with him—Young. It was a vexing problem, one that added greatly to a captain's worries. Ben finished dressing and approached the coach.

"I guess you know what I want to talk about," Ackerman began abruptly. "It's about Young."

"You know the facts of the case," the coach continued. "Young's ruining our team. Every time he gets his hands on the ball he shoots. I'll admit he's a great long-distance shooter but that only makes it worse for the rest of them. The other fel-

lows are disheartened and instead of having a smooth offense, I have one man hogging the ball and four others, knowing they're not going to get a pass, losing interest in the game.

"All through the month of practice we had, Young did the same thing. You know how our forwards, Harter and King, complained that even when they were free and yelled to Young to pass, how he deliberately took a long heave himself.

"And you know, too, Ben, that I don't dare take Young out. He's the best guard in this Tri-State league. If we hope to win the pennant, which we haven't done since the league was started, we'll have to have better teamwork than we had tonight. Tonight's game was played by Graham College versus Henry Young, of Danville. But, on the other hand, if we want to cop the Tri-State pennant, we'll have to stop the forwards of Quaker Valley or Johnstown. And Young's the only man who can stop them."

The coach wiped the perspiration from his forehead. The dressing-room was steamy, and talking called for energy.

Ben was gazing at the opposite wall in a meditative manner.

"Wonder what makes him play lone-handed?" he asked slowly.

"Don't know," the coach replied. "I've warned him time and again to remember there were others on the floor wearing Danville's uniforms. I thought when the season started he would be satisfied to play the stellar game at guard he did last year. But this season it looks like he wants to combine his position with that of a forward."

"Do you think benching him would do any good?" Ben inquired.

"I doubt it. We couldn't do without his guarding. The team has disappointed me this year with being so weak defensively. And what's worse, Young knows we need him."

Ben shook his head. "It's tough, I'll say. Just now I can't think of anything we might do."

Ackerman rose. The talk had come to an unsatisfactory end. As Ben was about to leave, the coach called after him, "If you think of anything, let me know."

"All right," Ben called back, and a moment later the door closed behind him.

BUT as the season wore on, Ben's mind was destitute of any plan to change Young's ways, and the guard became the sensation of the league.

Danville didn't win all of its games. Sometimes Young's shooting was off, and in those games Danville's scoring was brought to a near standstill.

Danville's opponents were having an exceptionally hard time rolling up scores of their own. Young was outdoing himself at guard. Time and again when the opponents' attack swept into Danville's territory, Ben thought a basket must surely result. But almost every time he was agreeably surprised to find Young, looming large under the basket, coolly intercept a pass, slap the ball from the hands of an intended shooter, or after the enemy had let go a long toss, take the ball as it bounced off the banking board and dribble away.

Then the fun would begin. Fun for the spectators but not for Ben or his teammates.

Once Young secured possession of the ball, as he almost always did, he would either fake a heave to one of the forwards hovering expectantly near the opponents' basket, or stand still a minute until the other team ran to its defense formation.

SLOWLY he would dribble to the middle of the floor. Then, once inside the ring where the centers jumped, he would take deliberate aim and start the ball on an arching drive. And often the ball would find the hole and two points would be credited to Danville's score.

Sometimes in the heat of the game Ben would yell, "What's the matter with you? Pass that ball!"

The other players would snarl at him. They taunted him. "Grandstander!" and "Quit hogging that ball!"

But Young would only smile, a light, fleeting smile that touched his lips a moment and then was gone. Back to his position he would go while thunderous applause followed him.

But dissension was bound to make its appearance. It came one day after practice when four of the squad, Harter and King, forwards, Lake, a sub-forward, and Fillmore, the running guard, gathered in one corner of the dressing-room. For a while they talked in low tones. Then they arose

and came to the captain, who had just finished dressing.

Ben looked up in surprise at their approach. A feeling of uneasiness shot through his body and drew his features into a worried frown. The faces of the four men were grim. Their lips were set.

Harter spoke.

"Ben, I guess we've stood it long enough. We're not needed on the team. Young can do all the playing by himself. We're willing to stay if Young is put off. Otherwise we're through."

Ben stood up and looked steadily from one to the other. Finally he spoke to Harter.

"You're talking through your hat, guy. Come down to earth."

"You heard us before," Harter replied. "Will you or will you not ask coach to yank Young from the lineup?"

"That's a threat, Harter. Why don't you go to coach direct?"

"Ackerman wouldn't listen to us. You're playing with us on the same team. You can feel as we do. And besides, you have more influence with the coach than we have."

Ben coaxed them to stay. He pleaded until his patience left him. But Harter and the others refused to budge. At last he lost his temper and burst out in a low, hot fury.

"You guys are not only yellow, you're jealous. It galls you when Young gets the applause. You want that ball because you'll get the baskets and the credit. You're nothing but a bunch of grandstanders yourselves!"

THE coach entered the dressing-room at this moment and sidled over to the group. Ben glanced up in surprise at the latter's unexpected entry. This, together with the calling down he had just given the squad, made him nervous, so that now his hands were trembling and his lips dry.

Before anyone had a chance to speak further, Ben called out, "Come over here, Young!"

A moment later a six-foot, broad-shouldered, iron-muscled man pushed through the congregated players. Young had blue eyes and light, wavy hair. Hands on hips, he surveyed Ben.

"Well?"

He was cool, calculating, almost cynical, one would have judged. The captain, shorter by two inches and slenderer, was impulsive. His regular features tightened, his face burned a slight red as he flung at the big guard.

"Young, answer me this question. Why do you insist, in spite of being repeatedly warned, on playing the kind of game you do? You know what I mean—hogging the ball and all that!"

"Why, I don't mind telling you," Young said. He almost drawled his words. "I take most of the shots because this year I want to lead in the Tri-State league scoring. Usually the player who heads the scoring list is voted the most valuable player in the league."

Ben knew the guard had spoken the truth. So a player's desires were wrecking the team!

While Young was talking, the coach regarded him gravely, almost somberly.

Young looked calmly from face to face. Ben's eyes were smoldering, they seemed ready to burst into flames. The air was tense.

"Now you can't say we haven't got a good reason for wanting to quit," Harter burst out furiously. He jerked a contemptuous thumb at Young. "He's playing the game for himself."

"We're getting results, though, aren't we?" Young sneered. "We happen to be in first place and not on account of your efforts, either."

Ackerman broke in. In striking contrast his voice was cool—cold, it seemed, to the impassioned outbursts of Ben Tillson and Harter.

"This matter has gone far enough. It's time for me to say something.

"Harter, there's no need for you or King or Fillmore or Lake to hand in your uniforms."

The coach turned to face Young. Their eyes met, were locked. The coach's voice was like pelting shot.

"Young, hereafter you'll sit on the bench. Blaine will take your place. If you want to quit I'm ready now to have you tell me."

Young's face showed no emotion. "It's all right," he spoke in his usual slow way. "The bench for me." Lightly he shrugged his big shoulders and walked away.

Coach Ackerman had done his best to

keep the team together, but his latest effort had struck a terrific blow at Danville's pennant chances.

Before Young had been benched the Danville team had been tied for first place with Quaker Valley, last year's champions. Now the team dropped three games in a row and slid into second notch.

Graham ran through a feeble Danville defense to pile up over forty points. Quaker Valley came next, and in a nightmare that lasted an hour the former champs chalked up sixty-eight points! Quaker Valley went into first place.

With Young out of the way the Danville offense, functioned for the first time for more than a few minutes; and it wasn't at all bad.

At center, Ben inspired his mates. He took nearly every tipoff, often grabbing the ball after he had jumped for it. Harter, King and Fillmore rounded out a smooth combination.

But there was no defense worthy of mention. Blaine was a green youngster without previous varsity experience. He was willing, but his willingness availed him little. And Fillmore was failing to cover his man.

COACH ACKERMAN came in for a good bit of panning. The papers pointed out that Young was the star of the team. He had far outscored his teammates. The year before he had been chosen on the All-State team, and this year he was surpassing previous performances. On the Danville campus the coach was freely criticized and at the games the students hissed him mercilessly when he made his appearance.

Then came the biggest upset of the year. The last place Ambridge team, definitely out of the running for the Tri-State pennant, was able to beat Danville after a most miserable exhibition of defensive work by the latter.

After that game the coach sought out Ben. The team mentor was plainly worried.

"Say, Ben," he asked anxiously, "do you think we ought to put Young back in? We can't go on much longer like this."

"That would just be scaring up the old ghost," Ben replied. "Harter and the others would quit."

"Well, then, let 'em quit," the coach declared vehemently.

So Young returned to the lineup. Young, smiling in a superior way, an eloquent smile plainly proclaiming the fact that Danville without Young was a helpless outfit.

Coach Ackerman didn't announce that Young would play until the team was dressed for the game with Quaker Valley and ready to go out to the floor. Then, seemingly as an afterthought, he remarked, "Young, you start at guard."

The crowd gave the team a noisy welcome, and when the subs had gone to the bench, leaving the starting five on the floor, Young was cheered by name.

Quaker Valley's attack collapsed. It could reach Young and no further. Not a basket did they score in the first quarter. Young looped three successive shots from mid-floor.

SCARCELY a word was said by the Danville players as they gathered together during a time out called by Quaker Valley. Harter's lips were compressed. He looked around anxiously at the players. It did not take keen observation to see that all but Young were displeased.

Ben tried to lessen the tension.

"Let's hold 'em this quarter, fellows. King, watch your man a bit more closely. Let's try to get our passing attack started." He glanced significantly at Young.

To all appearances the guard didn't hear him. He lay flat on his back, knees drawn up. His hands shaded his eyes from the lights so that Ben could not see his face very clearly.

"We've got to get them on the run," Ben continued, as the air seemed to tighten about them. "Work the ball in close and don't miss your shots."

Harter snickered; Fillmore grinned derisively. Fortunately the whistle shrilled then, and the players scatted to their positions.

Quaker Valley played viciously. A victory by Danville would put the two teams within a game of each other. The playing became faster, the fans were kept on edge. Quaker Valley managed to get a basket—her only one of the half—but Young bagged two while King counted a third.

Ben was glad when the rest between

halves was over. Only the coach had spoken a few words. For the rest of the time there had been silence—a grim, foreboding silence.

Danville played cautiously in the third period, maintaining its nine-point lead. In the last quarter Quaker Valley, realizing that only a determined rally would overcome Danville's lead, started her most effective thrusts.

And it was in the last quarter that Young rose to glorious heights.

Aiken, the star forward of the Tri-State league, dribbled past King. He rounded in toward the basket.

Ben lunged at the ball and missed. Aiken drew up to shoot. Then, with ridiculous ease, Young reached out and snatched the ball.

That was only the beginning. A few times Quaker Valley's forwards got the ball to Danville's foul line. Seldom any farther.

Young totaled five baskets that period. Once a Quaker Valley man rushed at him but Young, without taking time to aim, heaved the ball from nearly three-quarters of the floor. The ball hit the banking board just above the basket, then dropped in. A spontaneous roar burst from the crowd.

Danville was within striking distance of first place.

Just as Ben had feared, Harter announced his intention of quitting. As the Danville forward turned to leave, Ben grabbed his shoulder.

"Listen, 'Hart,' I want you to promise me you'll wait a few days."

"What for?" Harter demanded. "It'll be the same old story."

"Just till next game," Ben urged. "Do it for the school if for nothing or nobody else."

"All right," Harter yielded grudgingly.

Ben walked slowly to his rooms. He had to think of something that would keep the squad from open rebellion. The problem was simple—discouragingly simple. Here was a man in the lineup who was winning Danville's games. And at least four others resented this man's method of playing.

Yet the captain knew how foolish it would be to remove Young from the regular squad. Danville could hardly hope to

stop Quaker Valley's or Johnstown's offensives without the big guard.

Yes, the problem was simple. It was to keep Young in the lineup along with Harter and King and Fillmore.

Ben didn't for a moment think of asking the coach to allow Harter and the others to hand in their uniforms. That wasn't the way to do things. Victories weren't to be desired for themselves; they were means, not ends.

Ben wanted mightily to win the Tri-State pennant. The team was made up of seasoned veterans. And Ben, as captain, had the greatest reasons for piloting his team to the championship.

Of course Harter would have to stay. But so would Young. Both would have to be satisfied.

Even in the midst of this apparently hopeless mess Ben had to grin to himself.

"Baskets from contented players," he soliloquized.

Then the solution to the problem struck him the same evening in the midst of his school-work. The page of history faded before his eyes.

Excited, he ran his hand through his hair. He punched the palm of his hand. His lips opened and closed rapidly, as though that would facilitate his mental process.

His roommate regarded him quizzically. "Pin in your chair?" he inquired in a solicitous voice.

"Aw, dry up," Ben replied, entirely without malice. He was elated at having found a probable way out of the puzzle that threatened to disrupt the team.

He jammed on his cap, struggled into his coat. "Got to see the coach," he explained to his wondering roommate, and was gone.

The next day Ben got hold of Harter as the latter was going from his classes to practice. Carefully he explained to him what he had explained to the coach the previous evening.

"Of course we'll have to wait till our last game," Ben concluded. "But it'll be worth it. The Quaker Valley game is the last one on our schedule and something tells me we're going to decide the championship with that game. That'll be a dandy time to spring our surprise on Young."

Harter agreed and the matter was settled for the time being.

Meanwhile the race was narrowing down to Quaker Valley, Danville, and Johnstown. Quaker Valley had a two-game lead over Danville, in second place, but all three outfits were conceded chances.

With Young going better than ever, Danville took over Ambridge and Johnstown in successive nights. The big guard scored nine baskets in the first game and six in the second. He went into the scoring lead with Aiken, Quaker Valley forward, trailing by five points.

Then Graham pulled a startling upset by defeating the first-place Quaker Valley team. A sensational rally near the end of the game had given Graham a one-point lead, to which the latter had held tenaciously until the final whistle.

Interest grew to a white heat when Johnstown, now considered as having little chance to finish first, administered a beating to Quaker Valley. To top the whole thing Graham added Johnstown to its list of victims, thus definitely eliminating the latter. Then Graham submitted to a licking by Danville.

Danville was now a single game ahead of Quaker Valley. And the schedule, seemingly designed by men who could forecast the future, called for a last game between Danville and Quaker Valley. If Quaker Valley won, the race would be tied and a playoff necessary. If Danville came out on top, she would definitely clinch the title.

Ben, glancing in the paper at the list of scorers in the Tri-State league, saw that Young was in the lead, three points ahead of Aiken.

The two highest scorers were to be pitted against each other! Ben laid the newspaper on his study table and thoughtfully gazed out of the window. His lips tightened. If his plan worked, Young might not score a single basket.

The Danville-Quaker Valley game was to begin in twenty minutes.

In the Danville dressing-room Ackerman was finishing his talk.

"Don't let Aiken inside the foul line. He never misses his short shots."

Harter brushed past Ben and slid out of the side of his mouth, "Don't forget now," Ben nodded.

Then all was ready. Basketball in the

crook of his arm, Ben placed himself at the head of the line of players. "Let's go," he said gruffly, and they ran with easy strides on to the floor.

Quaker Valley was already on the floor. Ben glanced at them and thought they looked especially formidable, but that was due to a momentary nervousness.

Then the referee's whistle blew, Ben shook hands with the other center, and the game was on!

Ben leaped, tapped the ball to Harter, who passed to King. King shot the ball to Fillmore, traveling at top speed, and the latter, already under the basket, completed an easy counter. A basket in the first ten seconds!

But Quaker Valley was not caught napping; on the next play King's pass was intercepted and Quaker Valley turned loose its offensive.

Aiken took a pass in the corner and shot from that difficult angle. He missed. Young grabbed the ball.

Immediately Harter, King, and Fillmore dashed forward. But Ben did a strange thing. He stayed by Young's side.

Young dribbled slowly toward the center of the floor. And all the time Ben kept pace with him.

Young crouched in a shooting position. Ben stood near him.

"Here!" he yelled:

But Young pretended not to hear him. He balanced the ball on the tips of his fingers. Then the crowd gasped in surprise.

Just as Young brought his arms up, Ben leaped in front of him, his arms extended. Young stopped too late. The ball left his hands, struck Ben. The latter was after it in a flash. A lightning heave to King, waiting under the net. A goal.

Part of the crowd cheered, part hissed. Most wondered.

The play speeded up. Danville bagged its third basket. Quaker Valley counted a half-minute later. The Valley team shot a foul. The score was six to three in Danville's favor.

On the next play Young leaped in the air to block a shot. With the same motion he started to dribble toward the other basket.

Once again Ben stayed by his side. The guard got set, but suddenly Ben knocked the ball from his hands.

Young's face went white with hate.

The Danville try had failed. Now Quaker Valley swung into the attack. Ben ran toward the back court. He saw Young's pale features and guessed what was going on in the guard's mind.

Quaker Valley flashed a splendid attack. The passes were short and whizzing.

Now a forward had it, now the center. The Valley players streamed past the first line of Danville's defense.

Aiken took a pass and got away. Young ran him to the basket. He saw he couldn't prevent the easy shot. He fouled Aiken, throwing the latter off his feet.

Young was desperate. Ben wouldn't let him shoot and to his temporarily crazed mind his mates were not attempting to stop Aiken.

Aiken sunk both bouls. Young was but one point ahead of him.

Again and again in that first half Ben carried out his plan of stopping Young. Not one of the guard's shots completed its course.

The two teams spurted near the end of the half. Play was fast and fierce. Spills were frequent. The crowd was on edge.

Quaker Valley's center counted twice in rapid succession. Fillmore put in a foul try. The score was Danville, nineteen; Quaker Valley, sixteen.

A little more than a minute for the first half to go. Ben took the ball, passed to Harter. Then Harter to King, to Harter, to Fillmore. The latter pivoted sharply, threw a short toss to Ben. Ben dribbled and with perfect rhythm of body movement jumped for the basket with the ball in his hand. Goal!

The Valley center copped the next throw-in. He passed toward the sidelines. Just as the ball seemed ready to go out of bounds, Aiken flashed by. He dribbled up the floor, ducked Young and shot. At the moment he let go the ball Young fouled him. The basket counted, as did the foul Aiken attempted. The timekeeper's pistol cracked to end the half. Danville, twenty-one; Quaker Valley, nineteen.

THE second half banged off to a flying start. Fillmore missed a shot, King ran in, jumped to get the rebound, and missed. He went down with two Valley players.

Now the opponents were coming down

the floor. Aiken got a pass, started to dribble. Ben crossed in front of him and took the ball.

The game continued at top speed with most of the playing near the Valley basket. There was a mixup after King had charged in following a shot. Aiken emerged from the knot of players with the ball. He ran down the floor.

The captain was two feet behind Aiken.

Ben saw Young come out to meet the oncoming player. A body feint toward the left and the expert dribbler passed Young.

Ben gained ground when Aiken dodged. He caught up with him. Then, just as Aiken began lifting the ball for the basket, Ben shouldered him out of bounds.

The referee called the foul. Ben straightened up and looked at Young. The guard was regarding him with a sort of wonderment. Aiken missed his free shot.

Ben caged the next basket but Quaker Valley bucketed the following two to tie the score at twenty-three all. King counted a foul to put Danville one point in the lead.

Quaker Valley missed a shot. Young pulled the ball down.

Ben ranged alongside of him. "Give me the ball and go ahead down the floor."

Young hesitated a moment. Ben held his arms out for the pass. Their tense figures seemed like statues. Ben was praying—praying for Young.

Young passed the ball and started toward the enemy's basket. Ben flung it to Harter, standing in a far corner. The ball seemed scarcely to touch Harter's fingers before it landed with King, uncovered under the net.

"Shoot!" the audience screamed.

An agonizing instant King held the ball. Then he spun it to a whirlwind of speed in human form—Young, charging in. It was an easy basket.

Harter slapped Young's shoulder. Young ran up to Ben. "Call time out!" he shrilled above the drum-breathing din. The guard's features were twitching.

Ben called time out. The players were surprised. A team that sets the pace seldom asks for rest. Young faced the players.

"I called time out because I want to apologize. I'm a mucker, a selfish, unfeeling mucker. I've been blind all season.

Thought you fellows were against me."

Young laid a hand on Ben's shoulder.

"He showed me the way. He fouled Aiken for me. He gave me the chance to shoot those two baskets."

Ben faced the group. "Gang, from now on we're flashing the old Danville attack! Every man gets in it. Come on!"

Play started, Danville five points to the good. Young stood two points in front of Aiken.

Ben added a foul. Fillmore got a basket and a foul.

Then Quaker Valley cut into Danville's lead with a vengeance. The Valley center looped one, their guard two, in swift succession. Aiken made one from half the floor. Young made a good foul try.

Young was a single marker ahead of Aiken in their total scoring. Danville had a two-point lead. Time was nearly up. It was anybody's game.

Through sheer force, it seemed, Quaker Valley drove Danville into the latter's territory. A shot that missed, another vain attempt, then Aiken tilted it through the hoop.

The teams were tied! Aiken was one point in front of Young!

The teams dropped into position for the last time. A curious silence blanketed the pavilion.

The ball was thrown in and Ben caught it, leaping high. A fraction of a second he was in the air, looking round. Young only was free.

Ben sent the ball to the guard. As usual, Quaker Valley ran to its defensive formation.

Young was in the little circle where the centers faced off. One swift glance he gave Ben.

"Shoot!" came from the captain.

The ball sailed upwards. To the tortured Ben it seemed suspended in the air. Then it dropped swiftly downwards. In the heavy stillness the ball made a swishing note as it plopped through the netting.

And at that moment the pistol cracked.

Danville had won the Tri-State pennant. Young led in the total scoring.

The players ran for their dressing-room.

"Great shot," Ben called to Young.

And, strangely enough, Young said, "I'm sorry."



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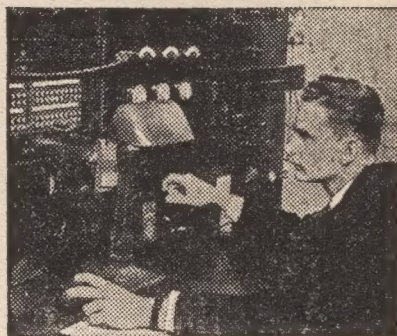
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Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send the sample lesson and your book which tells about the spare time and full time opportunities in Radio and explains your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please write plainly.)

NAME.....AGE.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....2FR

**The Tested WAY
to BETTER PAY**

"One Week from To-night You'll See PROOF that I can make You a New Man!"

**NOTE—No other man
in the world has ever
DARED make such an
offer!**



**THIS STERLING SILVER CUP
BEING GIVEN AWAY**

This valuable cup stands about 14 inches high on a black mahogany base. I will award it to my pupil who makes the most improvement in his development within the next three months.

I GIVE MORE than "promises." I give PROOF! If you're sick and tired of half-baked ideas—if you really **want** a build like mine—then **one week, 7 DAYS**, is all I need to **prove** I can give it to you!

You've got a body, man. Why not make it a real handsome **man's** body! There's NO good reason why you shouldn't have rippling cords of mighty muscle across your neck and shoulders. No reason at all why your chest shouldn't be strapping, big and husky, like mine—your arms and legs powerful—your wind lasting—your vigor **100%**!

I used to be a sickly, half-pint runt weighing only 97 lbs.—a "laughing stock" wherever I went. No fun. No friends. Right there I almost "fell" for some of these freak spring or weight contraptions to make me "strong." But **THEN**—by the luckiest break of my life—I discovered **Dynamic Tension**.

Apparatus is OUT!

Look at me now. You don't see any skinny, flabby, no-account bag of bones **here**, do you? This is what my remarkable secret has done for **my** body. Twice—against all comers—I have won the title, "World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." No wonder I've got no use for tricky weights, pulleys or machines that may strain your heart or other vital organs. I've found the **natural** way to build the husky, solid, fighting muscles that Nature **means** for you to have! And I've shown thousands of other fellows, many of them probably much worse off than you, how to develop themselves into champions **MY** way!

I'll give you clean-cut health **inside**, too—show you exactly how to get rid of constipation, poor digestion, bad breath, pimples and other weaknesses that are robbing you of the good times and things in life that can be yours.

Now make me **PROVE** I can do it. Let me send you the **FREE** Book that opens the door to **he-man living**. Just tell me where to send it. Use the coupon. There's no obligation. But—be **MAN** enough to send the coupon **NOW**!

Send for FREE BOOK

My big book, "Everlasting Health and Strength"—packed with actual photographs and vital facts every fellow must know to face life—tells the whole remarkable story of **Dynamic Tension**. Privately printed for me, it's **FREE** if you act **AT ONCE**. Are you ready to learn my secret?—ready to learn how I can give **YOU** the kind of body that will make you a masterful leader? Then tell me where to send your copy of my book. Fill in the coupon below, and mail **TODAY** to me personally. Address: **CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 1501, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.**



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ATLAS**

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I want the proof that your system of **Dynamic Tension** will make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name.....
(Please print or write plainly)

Address.....

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England—40-42 Chandos Street, London, W. C. 2

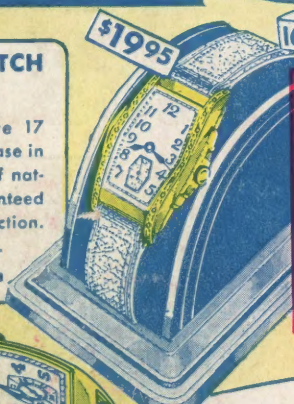
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P137—Newest square watch in white with 2 diamonds. Guaranteed 7 jewel movement. Complete with black silk cord band. Would ordinarily sell for as high as \$30.
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M211—Bulova's new feature—the Minute-Man. 17 jewel curved watch in charm and color of natural gold. Leather strap.
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Think of it—as little as 10c a day (paid monthly) will enable you to own one of these beautiful Diamonds or Watches. I'll send your choice of these bargains for approval and 10-day trial. Simply put a dollar bill in an envelope with your name, address and number of the article wanted. Tell me your age (must be over 20), occupation, employer and a few facts about yourself. Information held confidential—no direct inquiries will be made. I'll open a 10-month Charge Account for you and send selection for approval. If you are not satisfied, send it back and I'll refund your dollar. If satisfied, pay balance in 10 small monthly payments. Send your order today.



R126—Bulova's newest feature—the Lady Bulova—a tiny 17 jewel watch in charm and color of natural gold.
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A29/C13—Matched Bridal Ensemble consisting of 5 diamond engagement ring and 5 diamond wedding ring. Both 14K white gold. Exceptional value.
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A334—Sworn Perfect diamond with 4 other diamonds in newest 14K natural gold engagement ring. Affidavit of Perfection with purchase. Regular \$75 value.
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A137—A gorgeous new 14K white gold engagement ring. Large center diamond with 2 other diamonds. Regularly \$40.
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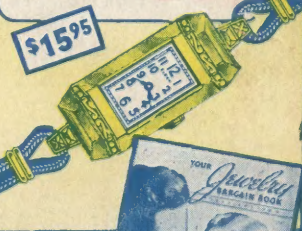


K22—Good-looking guaranteed watch for men. Unique style with numerals on case in enamel background. 7 jewels. Leather strap.
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I186—Massive initial ring for men. 10K natural gold with diamond and initials in white gold on genuine black onyx. A real bargain at this low price.
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L.W. Sweet

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